

Chapter 1- First Strike

(August 28th)

Harry, Sally and Hermione were crouched on the edge of a forest, staring out towards Malfoy Manor. They had chosen this as their first target, because, they had decided, it was more likely they would find Draco here than anywhere else.

Sally looked at the others, and then her hand slipped to the amulet round her neck. She saw Harry smirk, and realised that she was doing it again.

Ever since The Order had presented her with the amulet at the start of the summer, she had taken to playing with it during times of stress.

"Yes, Richard, I know what I am doing" She smiled at him "But you can tease me later" She looked over "Okay. On three?" They nodded "One. Two. Three!"

The three members of The Order vanished.

xoxox

(July 29th)

"Guys?" Sally looked up from her book as Harry and Hermione came in to the room "What's up?" Neither of them replied, but Harry took her hand, and pulled her up "Honey?" They made no reply, but led her out of her room and downstairs to the front room of Susan's house "Guys – if you don't..." She trailed off as she realised they weren't alone any more. The entire Order was facing her. She paused, then turned back to her boyfriend "Is it my birthday or something?"

"Yes" Harry smiled "But that's not why we're here" He and Hermione walked over to the group, and turned to face Sally "We found a solution" She stared at them for a moment, then smiled.

"Really?" She looked at them imploringly "This isn't some evil joke?"

“Would I do that to you?” Harry asked, then – when she stared at him – he continued “Okay, yes, I might do that, but not about this” He turned to Sirius.

“After you were attacked, we started looking in to the curse” He sighed “But, to cut a long story short, we couldn't find a cure” He saw Sally's face fall “So we decided to search in another direction” He turned to Remus, who continued the story.

“We found stories in the past about amulets that allowed mortals – muggles – to do magic. At first we assumed they were just fairy tales, but to cut a long story short, again, we found out they were true, and – with help from a few of our contacts abroad” He glanced at Viktor “We found one” He held up a crescent shaped amulet with a ruby in the middle of it. Sally just stared at it, then turned back to Sirius.

“Really?”

“Yes” Sirius nodded with a smile “There are a few rituals we have to do, to bind it to you, and it will take you a while to get used to it, but...” He didn't finish his sentence because Sally ran across the room and crashed in to his chest, hugging him.

“Thankyouthankyouthankyou!” She whispered, then turned to the others “Thank you – all of you” Remus held out the amulet, and she reached out and took it.

“We can start at 6 o'clock this evening” Sirius said “And the younger ones” He glanced at Harry, Sally, Hermione and Luna “Shouldn't make any plans for tomorrow – the blessing ritual can be kind of tiring”

xoxox

They re-appeared next to The Manor walls a moment later. All three crouched, and looked around.

“No alarms” Hermione whispered “Can you see anyone?”

“No” Harry shook his head, then glanced at the door “Summer – any protection spells?” Sally raised her wand, and a few moments later she shook her head.

“It's clear?” Hermione asked.

“Yup. We go in and search the place”

“If we find Malfoy?” Harry asked.

“Stun him, and bind him” Sally replied “Then cast an invisibility spell, so they won't find him” She paused “Same for everyone else”

“Okay” The three of them walked over to the door, and Sally pushed it open.

“Richard – take point. Miranda – watch our tail”

“Okay” They walked to the left, and Harry slowly pushed the door open. Sally followed, wand held in front of her.

xoxox

(July 31st)

“My Lady?” Harry gave a short bow, and held out Sally's wand “I believe this is yours”

“Thank you, My Lord” She bowed back, and then took her wand. She glanced at Hermione – the only other person in the room – then held her wand up “Lumos” The end of the wand burst in to light, causing Harry and Hermione to burst in to applause “Nox” As her wand went out, she turned and threw herself in to Harry's arms.

“So – are you ready to show the others?” Hermione asked “I mean – after you are done kissing your boyfriend to death”

“I think I am” She smiled.

“Good, because they are all waiting in the front room” Hermione smirked. Sally nodded, and all three of them walked out of the room, and down to the lounge of The White House. Just as Hermione had

said, the rest of The Order were waiting. Hermione and Harry stood to one side, then Hermione turned to face The Order “Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present Miss Sally-Ann Perks – witch”

xoxox

Half an hour later, Hermione held her hand up.

“Someone's coming” She said quietly. Sally gestured for them to stop, and the three pushed themselves against the wall of the corridor they were in.

A few moment later, Narcissa Malfoy walked round the corner, and found herself facing three wands. She opened her mouth, but was hit by a silencing spell before she could say anything.

“Mrs Malfoy” Sally said “Can I ask you to push your sleeves up?” Narcissa stared at her, then slowly raised each of her sleeves “No Dark Mark?” Narcissa shook her head “Good” Sally paused, then yelled “STUPEFY!” Narcissa collapsed, and a moment later, vanished as Hermione made her invisible.

“So – we aren't killing her” Harry asked.

“You know the rules, Richard” Hermione replied.

xoxox

(August 12th)

“It's simple” Susan said “Anyone who is carrying a Dark Mark, we deal with” She looked at the others “Agreed?”

“Yup” Sally replied, and Harry, Hermione and Sirius nodded.

“Anyone else, we... kidnap and hand over to the DMLE” She looked at them “This will cause complications, and make things harder, but...”

“But you don't want to kill someone who might be innocent?” Harry asked, and Susan nodded.

“Anyone who doesn't agree?” She looked around, but no one replied
“Good”

xoxox

“You know the rules, Richard”

“I know” Harry sighed “So – do we leave her here, and pick her up on the way back, or take her with us?”

“Leave her here” Hermione said “She won't wake up any time soon, and it's unlikely anyone will find her” She looked around “I don't think Draco's here”

“Me neither, but we should search the rest of the house, just in case”
He shrugged “We might find something to tell us where he is”

“Okay” Hermione levitated Narcissa's body in to a cupboard, and locked it shut, then turned to the others “Lets go”

xoxox

Sirius walked in to his lounge, and sat down next to Susan.

“Any news?”

“Not yet, no”

“Do you think that's good or bad?”

“Probably good” Susan smiled “If anything had happened, I am pretty sure we would have heard by now”

“Okay” He leaned back and sighed, then looked around “Where are the others?”

“Viktor and Luna are waiting at her house, along with Eric. Remus...”
She gestured out the window to the moon in the sky “Myrtle went back to Hogwarts – if she stays away for too long, the other ghosts tend to notice – and the Grangers are coming over in about ten minutes”

“Good” Sirius closed his eyes, then opened them again almost at once, not happy with the images his mind presented “So – how long now?”

xoxox

“So – we are done?” Harry asked.

“We have searched every where we can see” Hermione replied “There's no one else here aside from Mrs Malfoy”

“Okay” Sally smiled “Did either of you find anything helpful?”

“I found Draco's diary” Hermione smirked “But I wouldn't entirely class it as helpful” She held it up “I think we should leave it here”

“Why?” Harry asked, and Hermione blushed.

“It's mostly personal stuff” She said, still blushing “I am pretty sure it won't be any help, and I don't feel right about taking it” She glanced at Harry, who nodded in agreement. Sally shrugged.

“Okay – put it back where you found it, then go do your thing”

“Sir, yes sir!” She smirked when Sally frowned at her “Sorry. I just thought everything was getting a little bit serious” She reached round, and pulled off her backpack “Any suggestions as to where I can put them?”

“I have a couple” Sally said with a smirk, then she turned serious again “Do you know where the centre of the house is?”

“More or less” Hermione replied “If you give me five minutes or so, I can cast a spell to locate the focal point of the wards – that should be the centre of the house”

“Okay” Sally looked at her watch “Five minutes. Richard and I will go and get Mrs Malfoy, and take her outside”

“I will be as fast as I can” Hermione turned and left the room, while Harry and Sally exchanged a look.

"Do you think she is having a tad too much fun with this?" Harry asked.

"Don't ask me – you are the one who has known her the longest" Sally replied "Has she always liked making things go boom?"

"Now that you come to mention it..."

xoxox

(August 21st)

"We were thinking how we could be more useful" Claire said "I mean - I know I am teaching the three of them strategy, but..." She glanced at her husband "Well – we had a talk last night, and we think we have come up with something"

"I have a few friends who work in construction" Arnold said "We go back a long way, and they owe me a few favours" He glanced at Remus "I kind of told them what was going on – the coming war and all – and they agreed to help out"

"They know about magic?" Remus asked in surprise.

"No" Claire shook her head "But they know that that there are going to be a few terrorist attacks before the end of the year, and that we are going to try to stop them"

"Good" Remus smirked "I mean – given that we are setting up a paramilitary group and are going to kill a lot of pure blood members of society, I think that violating the statute of secrecy might be overkill"

"As long as we don't take a lot in one go, they can cover the shipments as part of their business" Arnold smiled "What about the government?"

"The Ministry will cover it up" Remus smiled "They got very good at that during the first war, and I can't imagine they have lost their touch"

“Excellent” Claire smiled, then gave a small chuckle “I think that, if there's a choice, you will want to give this to Hermione. I think she will enjoy it the most”

“Why?”

“Well – let me tell you about one of her chemistry classes...”

xoxox

Harry levitated Narcissa out of the cupboard, and set her down.

“Is the silencing spell still active?”

“Yes”

“Wake her”

“Ennervate” As Narcissa woke up, Harry held out his hand, and helped her up.

“We are The Order of V. We came here for your son, because he is a wanted Death Eater. However you are not, and so we will turn you over to the DMLE, and they can decide what to do with you. If you understand, nod your head” She waited for Narcissa to nod “Good. If we let you walk, will you try to escape?” Mrs Malfoy shook her head “Very well – come with us” She started walking towards the door, with Harry trailing Narcissa. When they reached the front door, they stunned her again, and then Harry levitated her through and out in to the garden.

“Where are we going to leave her?” He asked.

“We don't have to leave her anywhere” Sally smiled, and pulled something out of her robes “Early back to school present from our late Minister”

xoxox

(August 26th)

“Sal?” Remus called out to Sally “Do you have a moment?”

“Of course, Professor” Remus smiled fondly at her.

“Are you ever going to call me Remus?”

“Sorry. Force of habit” She shrugged “What can I do for you?”

“Actually - I have a present for you” Remus reached in to his robes, and pulled out a collection of keys “Here”

“Thank you” She stared at them, then back at him “What are they?”

“It seems that, before he died, Minister Fudge gave Sirius a portkey that goes directly to the DMLE offices. He thought that we might need it at some point”

“Okay...” She flipped through the keys, counting them “There are twenty keys here”

“Well – after Minister Fudge gave the portkey to Sirius, he gave it to me” Remus said with a modest smile “I managed to reverse-engineer the spell, work out how to duplicate it and...” He gestured to the keys “I thought they might be useful if you managed to capture someone who wasn't marked” Sally stared at him for a moment, then hugged him.

“Thank you, Professor”

xoxox

“And you didn't tell me this before because...” Harry stared at her.

“I thought it would be funny” She smiled. He continued to stare at her for a moment, then gave a small laugh.

“Fair enough” He took one of the keys “So - I put it on her, and activate it?”

“Pretty much” Sally said, then held her hand up “One second” She pulled out a scrap of parchment, and a quill, then wrote a quick note and stuck it to the front of Narcissa's robes “Okay – you can do it

now” Harry turned, place a key on Narcissa's stomach, then tapped it with his wand. A moment later, she vanished.

“Okay. So all we have to do is wait for Miranda...”

“I'm here” They turned to see Hermione coming out the door “We should get beyond the wards before we detonate it, otherwise bad things might happen”

“Define bad” Sally said.

“Well – our heads would be ripped from our bodies and scattered in several parts all around the grounds” Hermione replied with a smile “And that's the best outcome”

“Okay – beyond the wards it is” She looked around “Let's go” She watched as the other two vanished, then, taking the amulet in hand once again, followed their lead.

xoxox

(August 27th)

Sally walked in to the front room at The White House, and found Sirius, Susan and Harry waiting for her.

“I want the truth”

“About what?” Harry asked.

“This amulet” She held up the present they had given her nearly a month before “I have been researching it, and I can find no records of anything like it” When no one responded, she frowned “I know I am no Hermione or Remus, but I am not stupid, and I would appreciate it if you wouldn't treat me as if I were” The other three looked at each other, then Sirius nodded.

“Okay” Susan said “You are right. The amulet isn't exactly what we told you it was”

“Go on”

"We found out that we couldn't restore your magic very early on in our search" Sirius said "The curse that you were attacked with was identical to the one that The Goblet used to ensure participation in The Tournament, and there is no counter curse"

"But we did find records of a..." Harry trailed off, trying to think of the word "A magical battery, for want of a better phrase"

"A battery?" Sally looked at them in confusion.

"Basically, it can absorb magic, and then let whoever is wearing it use the magic it has stored"

"And how does this magic get absorbed?" Sally asked, but then her mouth fell open "That was the ritual was for?" She yelled "All of you gave up some of your magic in to this?"

"Yes" Harry said, standing up and walking over to her "We did it for you, because we couldn't stand to see you so unhappy"

"And how happy do you think I will be now, knowing what you sacrificed for me?" She glared at him "You should have asked first"

"We didn't think you would say yes" He replied, not turning away from her glare "And, before you ask, we didn't have to ask anyone to do this. When we told them what we had found, every single member of The Order volunteered"

"That's because they need me to fight Voldemort" Sally snapped back.

"No" He smiled at her, then he took her hand, and brought it up to his chest so she could feel his heartbeat "They did it because they love you. And because they are your friends" He leaned over and kissed her gently. She let him, then fell in to his arms.

"I'm sorry" She whispered "And thank you" She glanced at her mother and uncle "And thank you two too" She held on to Harry for a few moments, then pulled away "Are you going to tell the others that I know?"

"That's up to you, darling" Susan smiled "If you don't want them to know, we will keep it between us four"

"No" She shook her head "I think they should know how grateful I am" She reached down and took the amulet in her hand "And how much it means to me"

"Okay" Sirius nodded "I will ask them to come over tonight, and we can tell them then"

xoxox

The three students re-appeared outside the wards of Malfoy Manor, then Harry and Sally turned to Hermione.

"When's it going to go off?" Sally asked.

"I set the spell for a three minute countdown, and activated it when I left the door. So I would say it will be any second..." She pointed, and all three watched as a huge series of explosions ripped through the building. Flames of all different colours shot out of the roof and windows, and less than a minute after the first explosion had started, the Manor was nothing more than smoking rubble.

"...now" Hermione beamed "Well – that was pretty good"

"Pretty good?" Sally laughed "That was amazing! I have never seen anything like it"

"I don't think anyone has" Hermione replied, still beaming "And to be honest, when my dad suggested magically modifying C4, I thought he was crazy. But" She gestured back to the ruins "It appears to work very well"

"You can say that again" Harry said, then slapped his hand over her mouth "Not literally" She pushed his hand away.

"Spoilsport" Sally watched the interplay between her friends with a smile, but then coughed.

“We should go before the aurors arrive” She said “But, there is one last thing to do”

“What's that?” Harry asked.

“This” She turned, and pointed her wand skyward “FIDELUS AD VICTORUM!” When the spell had finished, she turned back to her friends “So – what do you think?”

“Pretty” Hermione said.

“They'll certainly know it was us” Harry added.

“I think that was the idea” Sally smirked, as they continued to gaze up at the giant, flaming-red V that now filled the sky above the remains of the Manor

Chapter 2 – Understand, We'll Go Hand In Hand

"So – despite the fact that your daughter was attacked in the Gryffindor dorm, you still think Hermione and I should return to school?" Harry was staring at Susan, while Sirius, Hermione and the Grangers were stood to one side, watching the ongoing discussion.

"Yes" Susan nodded. Harry turned to Sally.

"You agree?"

"Yes" Sally came over and took his hand "And, if you hear her out, I think you will agree" Harry gazed at her for a moment, searching for something in her eyes, then nodded, and turned back to Susan.

"So – wow me" Harry said.

"Okay" Susan nodded "Whoever attacked Sally simply wanted her out of the way. If they had wanted her dead, they could have done it while she was unconscious"

"True"

"But if she goes back, then they might use more permanent measures" She glanced at Sally "Not to mention that it would be kind of hard to explain how she got her magic back"

"Also true" Harry smiled "But if they are going after us three" He gestured to Sally and Hermione "Shouldn't we stay somewhere safe?"

"If we withdraw you now, then Dumbledore will not be happy" Sirius said, walking up behind Susan.

"And we care about Dumbledore's mood because?"

"Because he has put one of his lackeys in as Minister, and so he could, if he so chooses, make things very difficult for us" Sirius replied "But if you and Hermione return, then he will be quite happy and might not pay much attention to Sally"

"There is also the fourteen names" Susan continued "Narcissa Malfoy, and by now the DMLE, know that The Order is made up of three people. And so when the next attack occurs, they are going to be looking for three people" She paused "Dumbledore might be a cunning, manipulative old man, but he is not a fool. If you two are not in school, and these attacks continue, then eventually he will start to suspect something, and come after you"

"But if you are back in school, you two will have cast-iron alibis" Sirius smiled "And if Dumbledore believes you are being good little students, it will ensure he looks somewhere else for The Order"

"Okay" Harry held his hands up in surrender "Okay" He turned to Sally "You are happy about this?"

"Not being able to see you every day?" She looked at him "Do you even need to ask?" He leaned over and hugged her "But mum and Uncle Mike make a good argument"

"I know" He turned to Hermione "What about you?"

"I think they are right" She replied "By making Dumbledore think we are doing what he wants, it is far less likely he will suspect we are doing anything else" She paused "Plus it is our OWL year - I would like to try to pass as many as I can, even if we are going to be spending a fair part of the year blowing things up" Harry stared at her, then started laughing. When he had calmed down, he turned back to Sirius and Susan.

"Okay" He nodded "I will go back to Hogwarts"

"Good" Sirius said "Because we are due to meet Luna in Diagon Alley in about an hour, and I don't want to be late"

"Wait – you arranged this before I decided if I was going back or not?" Harry asked.

"I didn't think it was in any doubt" Sirius smirked, then he turned to Sally "There is one thing we have to do first"

"What's that?"

"I need your amulet"

xoxox

"It doesn't look any different" Harry stared at the amulet as Sally put it back around her neck.

"That's because he told you the secret" Sally replied, fastening it up and sliding it beneath her robes.

"So – no one else can see it?"

"Nope" She smiled "And it can only be taken off by you, Hermione or me"

"So no random Death Eater can take it, and render you powerless?"

"Yup" They both turned as Hermione came in "So – you over it, Min?"

"He cast a fidelius charm on a necklace!" She yelled, then blushed "I guess that answers your question"

"Okay. You ready to go?" Sally asked.

"Yup" She paused "You know that the Weasleys are most likely to be there, right?"

"Yup" Sally smirked "Why do you think I want to go?"

xoxox

"So – no one goes anywhere alone" Sirius said "Especially not Sally" She smiled at him.

"I am hardly helpless you know"

"I do know that, but no one else does, so – stay with the tour party and don't wander off alone"

"Yes boss" She smiled, then turned to Harry "Mr Potter?"

"Yes, Miss Perks?"

“Would you like to take a stroll along to the book store?”

“I think I might” He turned to Sirius “Would you like to come with us?”
He glanced at Hermione “We need to get Minnie a present”

“Of course” He turned to Susan, but before he could speak she smiled.

“I will accompany Minnie and her parents” She looked at her watch
“Half an hour okay?”

“Yup”

“Then we will see you shortly” She turned to the three Grangers
“Shall we go?” They all nodded, and as they started to walk down the Alley, she heard Sirius yell from behind her.

“Don't call me shortly”

xoxox

“Harry! Sally!” Luna sprinted down the street, followed by her father, until she caught up with her friends.

“Good morning Luna” Sally smiled “How are you today?”

“I am fine and full of pep!” She beamed at them “Especially since your lovely boyfriend and the glorious Miss Minnie will be returning this year”

“Did everyone know except me?” Harry asked.

“Of course!” Luna beamed “If you think about it, it was fairly obvious. So what did you get Minnie for her birthday?”

“Two books on ancient runes” Sally said “Since it is OWL year, we thought it might help her a little”

“Of course” Luna smiled “I bought her a necklace” She looked around, then pulled out a box and opened it “Since her relationship with Viktor is going well, I thought she could do with more feminine things”

"It's very nice" Harry smiled, and Sally nodded.

"Let's hope she thinks so too" Luna put the necklace away, then looked around "A lot of aurors in the Alley today, don't you think?"

"Now you come to mention it" Sally looked around "There are more than usual" She turned back to Luna "I take it you know why?"

"I am surprised you didn't hear" Luna smirked "The Daily Prophet reported that Malfoy Manor blew up last night. They are blaming it on a group called The Order of V"

"Did they say what this Order wants?" Harry asked.

"They are not sure. But Mrs Malfoy's testimony about being rescued, and about The Order hunting for her son, features quite prominently in the story"

"And the general opinion of The Order?"

"The Prophet says they are vigilantes, while The Quibbler says they are acting against Voldemort while The Ministry sits idle" Luna glanced at her father, who bowed slightly.

"Cool" Sally looked at her watch "We are supposed to catch up with Minnie and her parents. Do you want to come?"

"I just need to buy my books" She looked at her father "Meet you for ice-cream?"

"Okay"

xoxox

Hermione watched her parents attack the ice-cream they had ordered, and smiled. Claire looked up at her daughter, and smirked.

"I know what you are thinking, dear, and you can wipe that smile off your face right now"

"Sorry mum" Hermione continued to smile "But I can't help remember the good old days, when you wouldn't even let me look at ice-cream during the day, let alone eat three bowls of it"

"We only do this once a year" Arnold responded "And I noticed that you are not exactly being shy about enjoying it" He smiled as Hermione blushed.

"I'm a kid" She replied "That's my excuse!"

"Well said" They all turned as Sally and Harry walked up behind them and sat down, while Sirius nodded to the group, then went in to the shop to order some more.

"Did you get everything done?" Hermione asked.

"Yes" Harry replied "And we ran in to Luna" He filled her in on the discussion they had had about The Order "She said she would join us in a little while"

"Which is why I ordered for her as well" Sirius came out of the shop, holding four bowls of ice-cream. He placed one on the table, put a freezing charm over it, then handed out the other bowls and sat down "So – meet anyone interesting?"

"I ran in to Ginny and Ron" Hermione said with a smile "They are both looking forward to going back to school. Going to try out for the Quidditch team – Ron at keeper, and Ginny at seeker" She glanced at Sally "They seem to know that you aren't coming back"

"Wonder who could have told them that?" Sally replied.

"Indeed" Hermione smirked "Ginny also seemed some what happy about the idea of having Harry all to herself this year" She smiled sympathetically at him "So I would prepare yourself for another exciting year of plots from The Wacky Slytherin, Mr Potter"

"Oh joy of joys!" He sighed, then turned to Sally "Are you sure you don't know who cursed you?"

"Why?"

"I was hoping they could do me as well"

xoxox

"Who's that?" Claire pointed across the Alley, to where a group of aurors appeared to be escorting a man through the Alley.

"That, my dear Claire, is the new Minister of Magic" Susan said "His name is Amos Diggory"

"As in..."

"Yeah" Susan nodded "Father of Cedric" She turned back to the approaching group "There were a few suggestions that the events of the Tournament were part of the reason he got the promotion"

"Really?"

"Really" Susan turned back to her family "But he was also Dumbledore's preferred choice for the post, and our beloved Headmaster has a lot of support in the Wizengamot" Everyone stared at Diggory as he walked through The Alley.

"So we shouldn't expect any co-operation from our new Minister then?" Claire asked "Well – your new Minister I should say"

"Probably not" Sirius sighed "And if he does start to speak out, who's to say that what happened to Cornelius won't happen to him?"

"So we shouldn't push the issue?" Harry asked "After the article in The Quibbler, there might be questions"

"Use your own judgement" Susan replied "And, although this goes against everything we have taught you, and everything you believe, if it's a choice between telling the truth, and staying off of Dumbledore's radar..."

"You think we should lie?" Hermione asked in surprise.

"Not so much lie, as..." Susan looked at Sirius.

"Just don't push the truth" He finished for her.

"Sounds like a good idea" Eric Lovegood said from behind them "Especially after this" He held up the paper "The new DaDa teacher at Hogwarts is a Ministry Employee. An under-secretary named Delores Umbridge" He glanced at Sirius and Susan "I take it you've heard of her?"

"Oh yes" Susan said vehemently "And I honestly can't think of anyone who is less suitable to be put in a classroom with children" She paused, then smiled "Okay - I can think of fifteen people, but you know what I mean"

"She's that bad?" Sally asked.

"The only reason I don't think she is a Death Eater" Sirius said "Is that Voldemort is too liberal for her tastes" He saw them smirk "She was an assistant to Mr Crouch during the first war, and was one his more ardent supporters. I don't think there is anything she wouldn't do to protect The Ministry and The Minister" He looked over at Harry and Hermione "Don't try to provoke her, and don't get on her bad side"

"Yes Uncle Mike" They replied, faces serious.

"Okay" Susan smiled "Anyone got any more shopping to do?" She looked around "Okay. We should go, since we are having some friends round tonight" She glanced at Hermione "Some very good friends"

"Really?" Hermione's smile brightened.

"He should be there in about half an hour or so"

"Then what are we waiting for?" She bounced to her feet and picked up her bags "Lets go!"

xoxox

Later that evening, Hermione and Viktor were sat in her back garden, watching the moon rise.

"You are here to stay?" Hermione asked.

"Yes" Viktor smiled "My parents agreed that I needed a holiday after last year, and they didn't seem to mind me taking it here" He put his arm round her shoulder "And – with The Order doing what it is doing - I would rather be here"

"Well – you won't hear me object" She nestled further in to his arms, and sighed softly "Any idea what you are going to do, while you are here?"

"I already talked to Susan and Uncle Mike about that. I will be helping find the other Manors, and tracking down Death Eaters"

"Thank you" She leaned up and kissed him. Then she shivered.

"You are cold?" He started to take off his outer robe, but she stopped him.

"We can go inside" She said, standing up "Lets see what the others are up to"

xoxox

Ginny smiled as Harry walked through the arch-way to the platform alone, but a moment later her face fell as he paused, then turned back as Sally followed him through.

"I thought Mum said that Perks wouldn't be coming back this year" Ron said from beside her.

"She did" Ginny frowned "So what's she doing here?" They both stared at the couple for a moment, then Ginny suddenly snapped her fingers and smiled "She doesn't have her trunk"

"Sorry?"

"Perks – she doesn't have her trunk" Ginny smiled again "She isn't coming back!" She turned and hugged her brother.

"Aren't you going to talk to them?"

“No – not while she's there” Ginny frowned at Harry's girlfriend “He still thinks he is in love with her, and since they are holding hands and staring at each other like there is no one else in the world, I don't think Harry would welcome my presence”

“But...”

“He will have a whole year to spend without her, Ron. And once she is out of sight, I am pretty sure I can make him put her out of mind as well” She looked back at the couple, and smiled again “I think this could be my year”

xoxox

Luna found Harry and Hermione sat in one of the carriages on their own, both of them with their head buried in a book. She opened her mouth to say hi, then noticed the looks on their faces, and simply sat down opposite them, and pulled out a book of her own.

xoxox

“Harry?” Ginny slid the doors to the carriage open, and peered inside. Harry, Luna and Hermione were all reading quietly.

“Miss Weasley” Harry looked up, then stared across the carriage
“Luna?” Hermione looked up in surprise.

“Yes, Harry?”

“When did you come in?”

“About an hour ago” She smiled “You two were reading, and I didn't want to disturb you”

“Oh” Harry smiled at her “Sorry. I guess we were distracted”

“Don't worry about it” Luna smiled, then turned to Ginny “Miss Weasley – did you have a nice summer?”

"Yes, Luna, thank you" Ginny smiled back at her, then turned to Harry "I was sorry to hear about what happened to Sally" She sighed "A magical accident on the last day of term just seems so unlucky"

"It does, doesn't it?" Harry replied, glancing at Hermione "How did your mother find out about it? I didn't think it was public knowledge"

"Headmaster Dumbledore mentioned it in passing" Ginny said "Ron was talking about the Quidditch team, and the Headmaster mentioned that Sally wouldn't be back, as she had had an accident" She stared at them "I didn't realise it was meant to be secret"

"It's not" Hermione replied "But we didn't realise that Dumbledore was talking about Sally's personal life to all and sundry" She shrugged "I guess it will become common knowledge over the next few months anyway"

"So you and Ron are trying out for Quidditch?" Luna asked, trying to change the subject.

"Yeah" Ginny smiled "Ron's going for keeper, and I am trying for seeker"

"I suppose some of the other teams will be holding try outs as well" Luna mused "Draco won't be coming back, and some of the other Slytherins will have left school. I guess quite a lot of people have left since the last Quidditch match was played. This year could be quite entertaining for once – if all the teams are starting afresh"

"Most of the Gryffindor team are still there"

"So – they might actually win a match this year?" Hermione asked with a smirk, causing Ginny to frown.

"Stranger things have happened" Luna replied, but seeing Ginny's face, she decided that another topic of conversation was needed "So, Harry – what's Sally going to do with her time?"

"Well – they are going to continue to investigate the curse, but mostly she will be learning the non-wand-waving side of magic. Potions and the like"

“Why?” Ginny asked “If her magical core has collapsed, she can't possibly have a future in the wizarding world”

“That might be true” Harry replied frostily “But since I am going to be in the wizarding world, at least for the foreseeable future, she doesn't want to lose touch with it completely” He realised she was staring at him “What?”

“So you are going to stay friends?”

“We are going to stay a couple” He said firmly “Why?”

“You must know you don't have a future with her” Ginny said calmly “You can't marry her – it's against the law – and any children you might have won't be able to be part of The House Of Potter” She faced him, and took his hand “In the long run, you would be much better off finding someone who you can have a real future with, rather than stringing her along and giving her false hope”

“Thank you for your advice, Miss Weasley” Harry pulled his hand out of hers “I will mention it to my girlfriend, and her mother, when I get the chance”

“I am just looking out for your best interests, Harry” Ginny looked at him imploringly “Can't you see that?” When she didn't get a response, she stood up “Be like that then” She turned, and flung the door to the carriage open “Just don't blame me when she realises it and breaks your heart” And with that, she stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

Chapter 3 – The War at School

“She's Delores Umbridge?” Harry, Luna and Hermione stared up the Gryffindor table at a middle-aged woman dressed almost entirely in pink. Hermione turned to look at the other two “She is the formidable woman who terrified Death Eaters in the last war?”

“Apparently so” Harry replied.

“But she's so... pink” They stared up the table again.

“Maybe the Death Eaters got so freaked out by the colours that they just confessed to everything?” Harry guessed “I mean - she's just sat there and she is kind of scaring me already”

“So – how long do you think it will be before she tries to kill us?” Luna asked.

xoxox

Dumbledore glanced down the table to where his new DaDa teacher was sat. He had argued with Diggory over the appointment, but when Amos had asked him if he had anyone else in mind, the Headmaster had been forced to admit that no one else wanted the job.

“Trust me, Albus – she will be fine. She is an expert in the subject, and I assure you she will be able to comport herself in the classroom a lot better than Lockheart did”

Dumbledore had given in, and agreed to hire Umbridge on a one year contract, that would be reviewed at the end of the year.

But now, looking at her choice of clothes, and the somewhat anticipatory look on her face, he couldn't help but wonder whether he had made the right choice or not.

“Professor?” McGonagall stood beside him “Are you ready to start?”

“I think so, Minerva” Dumbledore looked around “I see that Mr Potter decided to come back”

“And that he is still friends with Miss Lovegood” McGonagall frowned.

“Indeed” Dumbledore had noticed the young Ravenclaw sat at the Gryffindor table “But I think that, we might let that go for the moment” He glanced up at his deputy “With Miss Perks departure from our hallowed halls, I believe we need to show Mr Potter some leeway”

“Are you sure, Albus?” McGonagall leaned down, and spoke quietly “If you continue to show Mr Potter this amount of favouritism, eventually certain parents will complain about it”

“Mr Potter went through a traumatic incident at the end of last year, and now that Voldemort has returned, we have to make every effort to ensure he is prepared to fulfil his destiny” He glanced at the three students at the end of the Gryffindor table “But before we can help him, we have to make sure he trusts us and is willing to work with us” He stared up at her. She nodded.

“So we are not punishing Lovegood so we can convince Mr Potter to follow our lead?” She asked.

“Yes” The Headmaster nodded “And now, Professor, I believe we are ready to start the sorting”

“Of course, Headmaster” She saw Professor Flitwick carry The Sorting Hat across the front of the table, and she walked round to join him. She turned, and nodded to The Headmaster. He nodded back, and stood up.

“Greetings!” His voice boomed across the hall “And, to those of you who are joining us for the first time, welcome to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In a moment, we will get the feast under way, but first, I will hand you over to Professor McGonagall for The Sorting” He sat down his deputy walked up next to The Hat.

The	Voice	Of	Hogwarts	is	how	I'm	known,
For	a	thousand	years,	it	is	I	alone
Who	sort	the	students,	decide	their	fate	:-
The	meek,	the	bold,	the	small,	the	great.
But	a	thousand	years	have	come	and	gone,
Yet	still	the	battle		rumbles		on.

The ancient conflict – dark v light
And who can say now which is right?
For the battle's pace gets 'ere more fast -
The Coming Storm is here at last.

Night has fallen, the sky black turned,
The One True Heir has now returned,
And even I, your faithful friend,
Can not see how this will end.
But despite the fact we may all die,
A job, right now, to do have I
So come forth kiddies, come one, come all
And see into which House you'll fall :-
Sneak or Fool, Brawn or Brains,
Yet if I am honest, they're all the same.

xoxox

The feast was nearly over when Dumbledore rose to his feet once again.

“Well – congratulations to our new first years, and welcome to your new Houses. Before you all go to your dorms, I have a few announcements for the coming year” He looked down at the table, then back up “The Forbidden Forest is off limits to all students, and the list of banned items is available from Mr Filch, our caretaker. Students in the third year and above will be able to visit Hogsmeade on various weekends, providing they have a permission slip signed by their parent or guardian. However such visits are a privilege, and can be suspended if your behaviour so warrants” He looked around, not glancing at anyone in particular.

“After the success of the Yule Ball last year, we will be hosting two similar events this year. The first will be a Valentine's Day Ball, and will be open to fourth years and above. The second will be The Founders' Day Ball, which will be held in May on the 1100th anniversary of the founding of the school. This will be open to all students, along with various representatives from The Ministry and other magical schools” He paused to let the chattering die down, then continued.

“Finally, I would like to introduce one new member of staff. Professor Delores Umbridge will be taking over the post of Defence Against The Dark Arts Teacher, and I hope that...” Dumbledore trailed off as there was a cough from further down the staff table. He turned, and saw that his new teacher was now stood “Yes, Professor?”

“I was wondering if I might be permitted to say a few words?”

“Of course” Dumbledore replied with a smile, then sat down.

“Thank you, Headmaster” She inclined her head, then turned to face the front “When I was first asked to take this job, I was a little worried - being responsible for educating and moulding the minds of the future leaders of this country is a daunting task. However I believe that it is the duty of every witch and wizard to do what they can to support The Ministry, and I am never one to shirk from my duty” She smiled at the assembled students.

“We live in troubling times, children. There are those who believe that their voice is more important than that of our Minister's, and that they should be allowed to act as they see fit, without regard to law or reason. These trouble makers believe it is acceptable to point the finger at hard-working public servants, and other, decent members of society, while ignoring the activities of those who would seek to destroy our way of life” She paused and looked around.

“However, with the leadership of our Minister, and the guidance of Headmaster Dumbledore, I believe that we can all move forward together, to continue the way of life we have enjoyed for centuries, and to ensure a brighter future for all of you”

As she sat down, there was a moment of silence, then a smattering of applause, lead by the Headmaster.

“Thank you, Professor Umbridge, for those stirring words. I am sure we will all take them to heart” He looked around at the reactions the speech had got, then continued “And now, you may all return to your dorms. Prefects, please guide the first years there. Thank you, and good night” He sat down again, and watched as the hall started to empty.

XOXOX

Harry and Hermione watched Ron and Lavender stand up, and start rounding up the first year Gryffindors.

“So – you aren't upset about not being a prefect?” Harry asked.

“Not really, no” Hermione shook her head “It would have been useful for various things – prefects can be laxer when it comes to following the rules, and being able to wander the castle at night has its advantages. But with all the other things I have on my plate, I think that prefect would have been one thing too many”

“I half expected him to give it to you two as a bribe” Luna said, glancing across the hall as the Ravenclaws started to leave “To get you on his side, so to speak”

“Maybe he is holding out for the seventh year” Harry said “I mean, once he makes us prefects, he has no control over us. But this way he can dangle the Head Girl position in front of Minnie for another two years” He looked across at her “Do you think he will?”

“It's always possible” Hermione smiled back at him “But I think we should leave the political intrigue for another day. I'm tired, and just want some sleep”

“Okay” The three of them stood up “Luna, would you like us to walk you to Ravenclaw Tower?”

“Thank you, but I think that I should be okay. At least for tonight” She gestured to the other students who were leaving “You two go – I am sure you both have something better to do than taking care of little old me” Harry reached over and took her hand.

“Better, maybe. But not more important” He leaned over and started to whisper “Do you think that Sally or Viktor would want you hurt just so we could spend more time with them? Or that any of us would be able to live with ourselves if we did that?” He stood up again “So – would you like us to walk you to Ravenclaw Tower?” She paused, thinking about it for a moment.

"No, but thank you" She leaned over and kissed his cheek "This is not because you have to rush off, but because I really don't think there will be a problem on our first night back"

"Okay" Harry nodded "If you are sure"

"I am" She waved good-bye to both of them, then turned and disappeared in the throng of other students. Harry and Hermione watched her go, then both turned and followed the Gryffindors out of the hall.

xoxox

"So this is what you get up to when I am not around?" Harry appeared behind Sally "I was kind of hoping for something more... interesting"

"Like what?" Sally asked, putting down the book she had been reading.

"Clog dancing maybe? Or Sky Diving?"

"You are a very strange boy. You do know that?"

"Oh yes, but I am your strange boy" He smiled then opened his arms. A moment later, she threw herself in to them.

"I've missed you"

"Me too" For a moment, they simply held each other, then he leaned down and kissed the top of her head "Hon, as nice as this is, and it is really quite nice, I need to talk to your mum and Uncle Mike"

"So that's all I am to you?" She asked playfully "A way to get to my mother?"

"Obviously" He smirked at her, then grabbed his arm dramatically after she swatted him "I just thought they would like to know about Professor Umbridge, and I thought you might appreciate hearing Vanessa's song for the year"

"I am sure I would" She turned, and stuck her head out of the door
"MUM?"

"YES, DEAR?"

"HARRY'S HERE"

"OK" Sally turned back to her boyfriend "Do you want to summon your Uncle?"

"I will just pop through the floo, if that's okay?" She nodded, and he turned and vanished in to the flames.

"I thought you said Harry was here?" Susan said, walking up behind her daughter.

"He just went to get..." She trailed off as both Harry and Sirius reappeared in the fireplace "Never mind" Susan walked past her and gave Harry a hug, then both she and Sirius sat down, while Sally lead Harry back to the sofa, and pulled him down next to her.

"How was the welcoming feast?" Sirius asked.

"I think Professor Umbridge doesn't like Luna, and probably doesn't like Hermione or me either" He paused, thinking about it "And she really doesn't like The Order" He told them about the contents of the speech, and Dumbledore's reaction.

"What did she mean by decent members of society?" Sally asked.

"Pure bloods" Sirius and Susan replied in unison, making Harry and Sally laugh.

"Do you think she could be a Death Eater?" Susan asked, but Harry shook his head.

"I can not imagine any self-respecting Death Eater wearing that much pink" He smirked, then glanced across at Sally "Although, I do remember seeing one once..."

"Didn't you mention something about Vanessa's song?" Sally interrupted, cutting off her boyfriend.

"Yes dear" He said with a smile, then he proceeded to recount The Sorting Hat's song he had heard earlier that day. As he came to the end, the other three were in hysterics.

"I wish I could have seen Ron's face after the last line" Sally smiled at the thought.

"It was a very interesting colour" Harry replied "It seems that neither he nor his sister appreciated being told they are the same as the Hufflepuffs, let alone the Slytherins"

"And what did our beloved Headmaster make of it?"

"No idea. He just seemed to take it all in his stride" Harry paused "Although if her sarcasm and cynicism gets any stronger, I think he might just decide to do the sorting himself in future"

"Won't that be fun to watch" Sally smirked "So – any other news, or can I have you all to myself again?"

"I think I am done" Harry replied "Ron and Lavender made Prefect, and he and his sister are definitely going to try out for Quidditch next Saturday" He paused, then sighed "There's something else as well"

"What?"

"Ginny came to visit us on the Express, and went off on a somewhat... passionate rant about my future"

"I take it that this rant involved dating her?" Susan asked.

"Not exactly" He glanced at Sally "Can I talk to you in private?"

"Okay" She looked across at Sirius and Susan "We'll be outside" She stood up, and pulled Harry to his feet, then lead him out of the room.

"So – what do you make of that?" Susan asked.

"My best guess is Ginny brought up the marriage and inheritance laws to try to convince our boy that he and Sally don't have a future" Sirius glanced at the door "And right now, Harry is trying to convince her that he doesn't care, even though the very act of mentioning it will make her think that he might" He cursed softly "I don't know why Dumbledore ever thought that girl should be a Gryffindor"

"Do you think he will succeed?" Susan stared towards the door.

"Lets hope"

xoxox

"I have to admit, I wasn't expecting this response" Harry said, looking at his girlfriend. When he had told her what Ginny had said, and the implications for their future, she had stared back at him for a few moments, then burst out laughing.

"Sorry" She got herself under control, then faced him, wiping the tears of laughter out of her eyes "But that's what you were worried about telling me?"

"Yes" He replied tentatively.

"Honey - I love you" She smiled at him, then took his hand as they walked along "I realise that my... change in circumstances might complicate our future, but I never doubted we had a future" She paused "Ginny really shook you up that much?"

"I guess she did" He shrugged "And, you know, I am not that good with politics and so on"

"That's true" She smiled as he swatted at her arm "So – you feeling better?"

"Lots" He leaned over and kissed her softly "Thank you. And sorry"

"What for?"

“For letting Ginny get to me” He looked down at his feet “For making me even consider the possibility of doubting you” She smiled softly and gently tilted his head up until she was staring him in the eyes.

“And she's had fourteen years to dream up ways to make you hers” She smiled “Vanessa put her in Slytherin for a reason, regardless of what Dumbledore thinks”

“Okay. I won't listen to her in the future”

“Good” She held her arms open “Now lets kiss and make up, then you can go back to school”

“Do I have to?”

“You could always fake your own death and come back as a guy named Paul” She said with a smirk.

“Really?”

“No, not really”

xoxox

“Where's Harry?” Ginny sat down next to Hermione.

“Freedonia” She replied without looking up from her book.

“Where?”

“I have no idea” Hermione put the book down on her lap, and turned to face the red-head “What do you want him for?”

“It's personal” Hermione continued to stare at her “I wanted to apologise for my behaviour on the train”

“Why?”

“I came on too strongly” Ginny sighed “I know he isn't all that good at the political side of things, and I thought that, as someone who was raised in the wizarding world, I might be able to help him sort out his future now that Sally isn't...”

"Isn't what?" Hermione asked "Isn't a witch?"

"Yes" Ginny said firmly "Whether he likes it or not, he has to face the truth. Sally isn't a part of our world any more, and as one of the Heirs of the Seven Houses, he has certain obligations to fulfil"

"So you think he should just abandon Sally and pick a better, more suitable person to date?"

"He will have to do it eventually" Ginny replied "The Wizengamot will have no choice but to force him to"

"You don't know him very well, do you?" Hermione asked, but didn't wait for a reply "Last year, he was willing to let The Goblet collapse his magical core, rather than being forced to compete in the Tournament"

"But Dumbledore said..."

"Harry didn't know that at the time" Hermione continued "And, since he was willing to become a muggle rather than do something against his will, what makes you think he would ever give in to the Wizengamot? I think I can safely say if it came down to a choice between Sally, and taking over The House Of Potter, then he would pick Sally" She paused, judging the impact of her words "Every. Single. Time" Ginny remained silent for a long while, then stood up.

"I think you are wrong" She turned to leave, then added "Tell him I was looking for him" Hermione watched her go, then sighed.

"This isn't going to end well" She thought.

xoxox

"I am supposed to give you a... marriage law?" Hermione had gone up to her dorm, climbed in to bed, closed her curtains and then sent herself down to The Chamber. After exchanging greetings with Myrtle, she found Harry sat at a table near the far end.

"Okay" Harry looked up and smiled "Give me a marriage law"

“Sorry” She blushed “I meant to say I am supposed to give you a message – Ginny told me to tell you that she wants to apologise for her behaviour on the Express”

“Does she?”

“No” Hermione shook her head “But she believes she can help with your political naivety in regard to managing your house” She noticed he was smiling “What?”

“Surprisingly, that isn't the first time I have had that offer tonight” He told her about his conversation with Sally “When we went back inside, Susan offered to help me learn more about my duties as Heir, with Remus as her assistant”

“And you think they'd be better than Ginny?” She asked. He simply stared at her “Okay – stupid question. So why are you looking up marital laws?”

“Self-defence mostly” He shrugged “The more I know, the less Miss Weasley can mess with my mind”

“True” She picked up the book and flicked through it, then put it down again “So – are you done for the night?”

“I just wanted to check...” He reached for the book, but she pulled it out of his reach.

“No – you are done for the night” She smiled down at him “Now – go back to your dorm, then come down and beat me at chess”

“You can't play chess” He said.

“Neither can you” She replied with a smirk “But taking your energy out on hapless chess pieces has to be better than sitting here, brooding all night” He stared at her for a moment, then smiled.

“Okay. Let's go”

Chapter 4 – Dumbledore's Army

"Good morning class" Professor Umbridge stood at the front of the class with a big smile "My name is Professor Delores Umbridge, and I am here to prepare you to take your OWLS at the end of this year" She looked around the class "The OWLS are the most important part of your education, and the results you get on your exams will have a large influence on your future in the wizarding world. So I trust that you will all work hard, and that, come the end of the year, you will be proud of what you achieve" She turned, and sat down behind her desk "Due to the somewhat... varied teaching methods you have been subjected to over the past four years, I have decided to go back to basics, and ensure that you have a proper grounding in all the areas of defence. So – if you could all open your textbooks to page one, we will start with shields"

xoxox

Half an hour later, Hermione raised her hand.

"Yes, Miss Granger?"

"I was wondering if we are going to be doing any practical work?"

"Of course" Umbridge turned to face the rest of the class "There will be practical sessions during the year, however I would like to make sure that you all have a suitable understanding of the theory before we start waving our wands" She smiled sweetly "I wouldn't want anyone to have any accidents. Especially not in my first week" She turned back to Hermione "Does that answer your question?"

"Yes, Professor" Hermione replied "Thank you"

"It is a pleasure. Now – can you tell me if you can shield against The Unforgivable Curses?"

xoxox

"I have to admit that was quite a good lesson" Harry said, as he and Hermione walked towards Myrtle's bathroom "More than I was expecting from a Ministry employee"

"Yes" Hermione nodded "She seems to have a good idea about the theory of magic"

"Do you think she will be able to teach us the practical side as well?"

"I guess we will find out" Hermione replied with a smile "But do you really think we can't pass our OWLS without her help?"

"You have a point" They arrived at the bathroom, looked around, then went inside "Myrtle? Are you here?"

"Wheeeeeeeeeeeee!" They both looked up as the ghostly school-girl flew across the ceiling of the bathroom, then did a loop and came down to land in front of them "Hello Harry! Hello Hermione!"

"Hello" Both students replied, then Hermione continued "Are you feeling okay?"

"Yes" Myrtle nodded enthusiastically "Why do you ask?"

"You just seem a little..."

"Happy? Peppy?"

"Psychotically chipper" Hermione replied, now staring in surprise as the girl started to float back and forth in front of them.

"I suppose I am" Myrtle replied, still floating around. Harry and Hermione continued to watch her for a few moments.

"Are you going to tell us why?" Harry asked her. She turned, then floated over and came to a halt in front of him.

"I have a date" She said with a bright smile.

xoxox

"Myrtle has a date?" Viktor asked. He had been waiting for Hermione when she sent herself home during lunch.

"Apparently so" Hermione smiled at the idea, leaning back against her boyfriend's chest "A ghost from the village came up, and asked her if she'd like to go out for a meal" She felt him chuckle against her "And no, I don't know where they are going, or what ghosts do on dates" She shivered "And I don't really want to think about it. How was your morning?"

"Very enlightening" He replied, resting his chin on top of her head "Remus asked me to look in to ways to use Sally's... situation to our advantage" She sat up, and turned to face him.

"Pardon?"

"The amulet that gives Sally her magic can be removed, yes?"

"Yes"

"And when she removes it, she is a mortal again?"

"I suppose"

"Remus believes that having someone who can switch between worlds could be useful in certain situations" Viktor shrugged "I do not know what yet, but he thought I should look in to it" Hermione continued to stare at him for a few moments, then nodded.

"I suppose. Would you like me to look in to this as well?"

"Only if you have some free time" He pulled her back to where she was before "I do not want you to over tax yourself"

"Okay" She relaxed against him, and sighed "I wish I didn't have to go back"

"No you don't" She could feel him smile "You love school, and you love learning" He kissed the top of her head "I would not have you any other way"

xoxox

“Professor Umbridge”

“Headmaster”

“How did your lesson go?”

“Very well” Umbridge smiled “Given the previous teachers they have had, the majority of them are better than I expected”

“And Mr Potter and Miss Granger?”

“They are very advanced. Although Mr Potter doesn't have the same grasp of theory that Miss Granger does, but neither of them are any slouches”

“And the practical side?” The Headmaster looked up when Umbridge didn't reply immediately “Delores?”

“I have decided to postpone the practical side for a little while” She said hesitantly.

“May I ask why?”

“I believe that they need a firm grounding in the theory of defensive magic before they start to practice it. They could easily get hurt, or hurt someone else without realising it”

“And how long do you feel it will be before they have this grounding?”

“I don't know” Umbridge shrugged “But I don't think I will be starting the practical part of the lessons until at least the next term, if not after”

“Even the students in their fifth and seventh years?” The Headmaster asked in surprise “You are going to interfere with their exams?”

“I don't believe so, Headmaster” She looked at him patiently “Once the students have a proper grasp of the theory, then the practical side should follow naturally” She smiled at him “I believe that this year will see the best results you have had in a long time, Albus”

xoxox

"Four weeks" Ron sat down next to Ginny "Eight lessons and she hasn't moved on to the practical part"

"I know" Ginny sighed "I am starting to wonder if she will ever move on to it" She leaned against his side "I know – it's a lot worse for you with your OWLS coming up, but everyone in my class is complaining about it" She paused "Almost everyone"

"Almost everyone?"

"Luna doesn't seem to mind all that much" Ginny replied "She hasn't complained once, and seems to be quite happy with the idea of not doing any practical work in the near future"

"Yeah, but Luna..." He waved his finger to indicate what he thought of the mental state of the fourth-year Ravenclaw, then stopped as Harry and Hermione came in to the common room.

"What?"

"She's not the only one" He followed Harry and Hermione's progress through the room, until they vanished up the stairs to the dorms "Harry and Hermione haven't been complaining either" Ginny looked over to where they had vanished, then turned back.

"Do you think it's connected?"

"Maybe" She leaned back in the sofa "Do you think they are doing the practical part on their own?"

"With Luna?" Ron asked in surprise.

"They have been pretty friendly with her since she was petrified in the first year" Ginny replied "Do you think they have formed their own club?"

"It's possible" He sat forward, looking thoughtful "Should we tell someone? I mean – if they are using magic out of class... someone should know"

"I will mention it to mum in the next letter" Ginny said "See what she thinks. I mean" She smiled "I don't want to get them in trouble"

xoxox

"Mr Weasley. The Headmaster would like to see you after dinner" Ron's head jerked round at the sound of Professor McGonagall's voice.

"Profwefer?"

"What part of that was unclear, Mr Weasley?" McGonagall stared down at him "And may I suggest that you swallow what you are eating before you speak?"

"Sorry Professor" Ron replied "What does the Headmaster want me for?"

"You will find that out after dinner, Mr Weasley. Now, I suggest you eat up. It would not do to keep Professor Dumbledore waiting"

"No, Professor"

xoxox

"What do you make of that?" Hermione pointed to where Ron was following McGonagall out of The Great Hall.

"Maybe he is getting expelled" Harry smirked "Or being stripped of his prefect badge for spending too much time in broom cupboards with Lavender"

"Really?" Luna asked "I thought he was hooking up with Parvati"

"After The Ball last year?" Hermione shook her head "I don't think she would go near him with a ten-foot barge pole" She paused "Although I have heard suggestions about him and Katie"

"Maybe that's why Dumbledore wants to see him" Luna suggested "The Headmaster has found out that Ron is dating two girls, and wants to get some tips from him" They both turned and stared at her

“Or he is going to tell Ron to stop being so silly before he gets both girls mad at him”

xoxox

“Ah, Mr Weasley. Do come in” Dumbledore smiled as Ron sat down
“How is the rest of your family?”

“They are fine, Headmaster” Ron replied.

“And your father? He is fine?”

“Yes, Headmaster” Ron nodded, although he was a little confused
“He has been working longer hours than usual, but my mother tells me that, with this new Order, it is necessary”

“And she is right” Dumbledore beamed at him “Your father is a good man, Mr Weasley, and you should be proud of him”

“I am sir”

“Good” Dumbledore paused, looking around the room. After a while, Ron realised he wasn't going to say any more.

“Headmaster? Was there another reason you summoned me here?”

“Yes” Dumbledore turned back to him “I have been made aware that a number of students are... shall we say unhappy with the way that Defence Against The Dark Arts is being taught. I was wondering if you had any views on that?”

“Sir?”

“You can speak freely, Mr Weasley – anything you say will be held in the utmost confidence” Ron paused, and then shrugged.

“She's okay”

“No problems?” Dumbledore stared at him “Nothing you think is missing or lacking?”

"We haven't been doing any practical work" Ron replied in a rush
"Umbridge... Professor Umbridge says that we need to learn the theory first, then she will get on to the practical side"

"She explained that to me as well" Dumbledore smiled in return "Do you disagree?"

"Yes" Ron nodded "I think we should learn the theory and the practical at the same time. By the time she gets round to letting us practice the spells, we will have forgotten the theory and we will have to learn it again anyway"

"So, if you had the option to practice what you are learning, you believe you would do better?"

"Yes, sir"

"And the other students? Your sister? Do they feel the same way?"

"Yes, sir"

"Then may I make a suggestion that might help?"

"Of course, sir"

"Hogwarts has no prohibition against study groups. I understand that the Ravenclaw students hold several groups every week, for every class and every year"

"And you don't think Um... Professor Umbridge would object?"

"I think I can say that she won't object" Dumbledore smiled at him "I can set aside a classroom for you, although I think if you ask your brothers, they might be able to find a more suitable place"

"Thank you, Headmaster, and I will ask Fred and George" Ron stood up, then paused "Sorry sir, may I depart?"

"One more moment" Dumbledore paused, considering his words "Do you know what Mr Potter and Miss Granger think of Professor Umbridge's teaching methods?"

“They seem fairly happy with it, sir” Ron replied, still stood “At least, I haven't heard either of them object”

“Why is that, do you think?”

“Ginny thinks they might be practicing on their own. That they, and Luna Lovegood, have formed their own defence club without telling anyone else”

“It is possible. Mr Potter has always regarded the rules as guidelines, and he is wilful” Dumbledore shrugged “I will look in to it, and see what I can see. Would you consider asking Mr Potter and his friends to join this group, if you go ahead with it?”

“I don't know, sir. Harry has made it clear that he doesn't want to be friends with neither Ginny or me. So have Hermione and Luna”

“Very well - I will leave it up to you, Mr Weasley” Dumbledore smiled at him, then stood up “If you have no further questions...”

“Thank you, sir” Ron nodded, then turned and walked out of the office. Dumbledore watched him go, then turned back to his desk.

“So, Harry, what are you doing?”

xoxox

“Ginny – do you know where Fred and George are?”

“I think they went up to the owlery” Ginny turned to her brother “Why?”

“Headmaster Dumbledore suggested they might know a where we can practice Defence lessons. He thinks that we should form a study group for DaDa”

“Really?” Ginny smiled in surprise “Cool”

“What's cool?” George asked.

“We are planning on forming a study group for Defence Against The Dark Arts” Ginny said with a nod at Ron “The Headmaster thinks that

you know somewhere we could practice where we won't be disturbed?"

"The toilet seat room?" Fred asked, coming forward to stand next to twin "What good would that do?"

"Can you show us?" Ron and Ginny jumped to their feet "Now?"

xoxox

"What's got in to them?" Harry and Hermione watched as the four Weasleys left the room together.

"They have been bitten by niggles" Luna said in an off-hand manner "It causes people to be unable to sit still for more than a few minute at a time" Harry and Hermione simply looked at her, so she shrugged "Okay. I have no idea. Ginny was saying something about a defence study group, but that could just be a cover for their scheme to take over the world" Harry gazed at her for a moment, then turned to Hermione.

"Did Ginny look a little... odd to you?" Harry asked.

"More so than usual?" Hermione smirked. Both Harry and Luna laughed.

"I meant she looked... I don't know" Harry waved his hand "Maybe I was just imagining it"

"It's possible" Hermione replied "But – enough about the wacky Slytherin and her nefarious schemes! It's two weeks to Hogsmeade. Are we going to invite the group to come visit, or take the chance to visit them?"

"Sally asked if she could come to Hogsmeade" Harry replied at once "She thinks that if the three of us vanish for the weekend, it might look a bit suspicious"

"So they are coming here?" Luna asked, then grinned when Harry nodded "This should be fun"

xoxox

"This place is amazing" Ron looked round the room that Fred and George had led them to, then turned to his brothers "How did you find it?" Fred and George smirked at each other, then turned to their siblings.

"We were returning from a prank on the Slytherins, and Filch started to chase us. He nearly caught us a few times, then this room appeared for us to hide in" Fred replied "He ran straight past, and we got back to the common room without any problem"

"The next day, when we came back, we found a room filled with toilet seats" George continued "But when we tried to take one out it vanished"

"Why?"

"This place gives you what you need while you are in it" Fred said "But it can't create stuff and make it real"

"Oh" Ron said, looking thoughtful "But if we were to practice in here, it would create, say, some targets" As he finished speaking, a group of targets appeared against the far wall "Wow. That's pretty impressive"

"So – now that we have somewhere to practice" Ginny said "Who do we invite? And how?" She looked at the others "Any ideas?"

"Well – it's nearly Hogsmeade time. What if we tell a few people, but keep it quiet so only the people we can trust find out, and arrange a meeting in The Three Broomsticks or somewhere like that" Fred replied "I know you said Dumbledore is in favour of this, but I think we'd be better off meeting out of school, where Umbridge can't find us"

"Okay" Ginny replied, pulling out some parchment from her robes "I will make a list of names, and then see what you think of it – you can add people or take them off if you think they are likely to dobb us in" She walked over to a table, and sat down. After a moment, she started writing.

xoxox

“You are sure that's the location?”

“Yes”

“And you think they are ready for their first proper attack?”

“Yes”

“Okay. I will let them know over the Hogsmeade weekend”

“Thank you”

“Is he the one...”

“Yes”

“Does she know?”

“No”

“Are you going to tell her?”

“No”

“Okay”

xoxox

“So – this is the list I have” Ginny handed it to her brothers. They read it for a moment, then all three nodded.

“No Harry?”

“I am not sure we can trust him with this” Ginny said “He seems to like Umbridge”

“Okay”

“So what are you going to call the group?” George asked.

“I don't know” Ginny replied, looking at Ron.

“How about Dumbledore's Army?” Ron smirked “After all – he did give us the idea” He looked at the twins, who both nodded, then he turned to Ginny.

“Very well. Dumbledore's Army it is”

Chapter 5 – Hearts and Minds

“Good evening” Dumbledore welcomed the teachers to the weekly staff meeting “Thank you all for coming. I will try to keep this short – with the Hogsmeade visit in the morning, I know that some of you will be busy” He looked around “Before I move on to some specific matters, has anyone got anything they would like to report?” No one spoke, so Dumbledore continued.

“Very well. There are three main items on the agenda. Firstly – the visit to Hogsmeade tomorrow. I would like to ask for volunteers to act as chaperones and security tomorrow. I need about five or six of you, as I already have some other people who have said they will do it” He looked around as various staff raised their hands “Thank you. I will give you more information tomorrow morning before the students set off” He made a note on the parchment.

“Secondly, I would like your general impressions on how Mr Potter is getting along since Miss Perks' departure”

“What do you mean, Albus?” Flitwick asked.

“How is he doing in his classes? Has he expanded his circle of friends?” The Headmaster looked around “Is he still dating Miss Perks, or have they decided just to be friends? Has he shown any interest in any of the other students?”

“I am not sure if this is any of our business” Flitwick replied, but McGonagall interrupted.

“Mr Potter is an Heir to one of the Seven Houses, Filius” She said tartly “And as such, he has duties to the wizarding world that can not be easily ignored. I am sure that Professor Dumbledore is just ensuring that Mr Potter is suitably prepared for what happens when he leaves school”

“Of course” Dumbledore replied “There is also the matter of his OWLs. It would not do for him to throw away any future he might have because he is doting on some girl that can not be a part of his life any more” He paused, seeing the look on Flitwick's face “And yes - I

realise that, in the end, it is Harry's decision, and one that we can not, and indeed should not try to, make for him. However he is a fifteen year old boy with little or no experience in the world. I can not imagine that that guardian of his has done anything other than encourage Harry to follow his heart, and so it will fall to us to make sure he learns the parts of his education that Mr Black has chosen to neglect” He looked at the others “I do not wish to control his life. I am just concerned that he will have to face some harsh realities in the near future, and that, as teachers and mentors, it is our duty to ensure that he is, in some way, prepared for them” There was a long pause, during which the rest of the teachers looked thoughtful. Then Professor McGonagall spoke.

“As far as I can tell, Headmaster, he has given no indication that he intends to find a new girlfriend. He spends most of his time with Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood, and although he is unfailingly polite to most of the other students, there doesn't appear to be anything more than that”

“I would have to agree” Slughorn added “If anything, I would say he has become more... reserved since Miss Perks' departure”

“Why?”

“Because while Miss Perks was here, it was obvious how much affection he has for her” Slughorn replied with a smile “But now that she has gone, he doesn't want to give even the slightest impression that he cares any less for her”

“I see” Dumbledore nodded “Well – thank you for your comments, and I would be grateful if you could continue to keep watch over him, just in case any problems arise” He looked down at the parchment on his desk “Finally, and this is again to do with Mr Potter and his friends, have you heard any rumours or mention of the events at the end of The Tri-Wizard Tournament?”

“Not a peep” Umbridge said “I would have thought that if he was going to mention them, then Defence would be the most likely place. But he hasn't said a thing” All the other teachers nodded in agreement.

“Good” Dumbledore smiled “After the stories he had published in The Quibbler I thought that he might be ready to tell his stories to anyone who would listen, but it seems that he has learned a little discretion, if not enough” He rolled up the parchment “If there are no more questions?”

“Have you learned anything further about The Order of V?” Flitwick asked.

“Alas, no” Dumbledore frowned “The Minister has had Narcissa Malfoy questioned on more than one occasion, but she is still telling the same story – that The Order went out of their way to save her because she isn't a Death Eater, and that there are only three of them” He shook his head “I fear that we will not learn anything more until the next attack, by which time it might be too late to do anything to prevent it” He paused, then smiled “If that is all, then I will bid you good night, and I will see those of you who are going to Hogsmeade in the morning. Thank you”

xoxox

“What time are they meeting us?” Luna asked.

“Eleven at The Three Broomsticks” Harry and Hermione replied together.

“So you aren't looking forward to today at all then?” Luna smirked, then looked around the Great Hall “Lots of people going out today”

“Yeah” Hermione picked at her breakfast, then pushed her plate away “And there's been a lot of... discussion around the common room”

“Discussion?”

“Ron and Ginny seem to have been talking to a lot of students. And, come to think of it, so have Fred and George”

“Told you they were going to take over the world” Luna smirked “Maybe they plan to meet up with the heliopaths during the Hogsmeade visit, then they will all invade the castle”

"It's always possible" Hermione agreed, then frowned "You don't think they are planning on doing anything bad?" She glanced at Harry "I mean – it would be easier for them to do it out of school than in"

"Well – the three of us will stay together until we get to the village, then we will have a lot more backup" He glanced over to where Ginny was coming in to the room "Unless TWS has got a lot braver in recent months"

"TWS?"

"Shorter than The Wacky Slytherin" Harry replied "Plus she might not realise we are talking about her if we say it"

"Oh" Hermione shrugged "Just so long as it's not a pet-name you are developing" The look of shock and outrage on his face answered her question, but also caused Luna to burst in to laughter. They both turned and looked at her. She held up her hand, unable to stop laughing. After a few moments, she got herself together.

"Sorry. I just thought that, if you get a pensieve of Harry's reaction to that, and show it to TWS, it should be something to watch" She started laughing again. The other two stared at her for a few moments more, then joined in.

xoxox

"So – we are meeting at eleven in The Three Broomsticks?" Ginny checked with Ron.

"Yes. There should be about twenty of us, and Rosmerta has said we can have one of the rooms in the back to meet" Fred said, sitting down next to them. Seeing Ginny's expression, he continued "Don't worry little sister, everyone knows that you and Ron will be in charge"

"We just thought we could be helpful" George added, sitting down opposite his brother "What with us knowing Madam Rosmerta better than you and all"

"Yeah" Ginny went a little pink "Thank you"

“Are you sure you are okay?” Fred stared at her for a moment “You have seemed a little...”

“Odd recently” George finished.

“I’m fine!” She snapped at them “I’m just tired - I haven’t been sleeping well, that’s all”

“Okay” Fred and George nodded, then got up and left their siblings alone. Ron continued to stare at his sister, looking concerned.

“What?”

“Fred and George are right – you do seem a little odd”

“I know” She sighed “But I promise, it is just sleeplessness. If it gets any worse, I will talk to Madam Pomfrey and see what she thinks” She stared back at him, and he shrugged.

“If you say so” He replied “So – do you want to set off now?” She paused, glancing across at Harry, Hermione and Luna, then turned back.

“Yes, I do”

xoxox

“Good god” Sirius and Susan watched Sally tear off down the main street of Hogsmeade, while Viktor followed behind at a more sedate pace.

“I know” Susan smirked “I really don’t know how she can move that fast without taking off”

“I hope Harry’s put his body armour on today” Sirius replied, smirking as well “Otherwise I don’t see him having that many ribs intact in the next few minutes” They both watched as Sally crashed in to her boyfriend, nearly knocking him over.

"Is she trying to kiss him to death?" Susan asked as she and Sirius started to walk towards the group "And if she is, should we bother rescuing him?"

"I can think of worse ways to go" Sirius replied.

"Very funny" Sally looked round from her boyfriend "You can't tell me that you and Dad weren't the same when you were younger" She paused "Actually – you can tell me that if you want"

"Yes dear" Susan smiled back, then turned to the three students who had just arrived "Good morning Luna"

"Hello Susan" Luna replied "How are you this..." She looked around for a second "...slightly blustery day?"

"I am fine, thank you" She looked across to where Viktor and Hermione were saying a more restrained hello than their friends "I think I'll wait to say hi to Minnie"

"Good plan" Harry replied "So – shall we go for a wander first, or would you all like to come to The Three Broomsticks?"

"Broomsticks!" Sally yelled with a smile "Broomsticks!"

"Well – that answers that question" Sirius smirked as his niece "Shall we go?"

xoxox

"What's SHE doing here?" Ginny hissed as Harry entered the pub hand in hand with Sally "I thought she wasn't a witch any more" A moment later, the rest of the group followed them in.

"Maybe Mr Black and Mrs Perks brought her here" Ron replied, then glanced at his watch "We really should be going, Gin – they will be waiting"

"Give me a minute" Ginny stood up, but Ron grabbed her arm "Let go!"

"No" Ron pulled her down "I know what you are going to do, and normally I would be all for it" He gestured to the door that lead to the back room "But if you go getting attention by yelling at Perks in the middle of the pub, then everyone will watch where you go next" Ginny glared at him "You know I'm right, Gin"

"Fine!" She snapped, then she stood up "Come on. If we are going to start this group, lets do it"

xoxox

Sirius lead the group to a table near the back of the room, then put up a privacy spell as they sat down. Harry and Hermione glanced at him questioningly, but he waved them to take a seat while he went to get drinks.

"Aunt Susan?"

"Just wait for a moment" Susan smiled at the children "When Mike comes back, we'll talk"

"Okay" Harry and Sally exchanged glances, but nodded.

xoxox

"We called you here today because we are sick of the way we are being taught Defence Against The Dark Arts" Ginny stood at the front of the group, with Ron next to her "Some of you have OWLs and NEWTS at the end of the year, and yet there has been no practical work in any of the lessons" She paused and looked down at a parchment Ron was holding "And some of you might know this, but both sets of exams are more than half practical, meaning that if you don't get a really good practical grade, you might as well not bother sitting them at all"

"Now, we could complain to our parents" Ron continued "But since Umbridge was appointed by The Minister himself, with the support of Dumbledore, our parents might not be able to get anywhere"

"So did you just bring us here to complain?" Dean Thomas asked.

"No" Ginny smiled "We decided to form a study group" There were a few murmurs of surprise, but she waved her hands to quieten them "We will meet once a week and spend an hour or two practicing what we have learned in DaDa, so that we have a chance of passing our exams at the end of the year"

"Although we are mostly doing this for the fifth and seventh years" Ron put in "We know that the third, fourth and sixth years also have exams at the end of the year, and we want to help you as well"

"Is this authorised by the school?" Justin asked.

"No" Ron shook his head "So we will meet in secret, in a room that only we will know about" He glanced at Ginny "We did consider asking anyone who wants to come to swear an oath that they will keep this secret, but we have decided that isn't necessary. After all" He said with a smile "We are all friends here, aren't we?"

"We will meet next Wednesday" Ginny took the parchment that Ron was holding "We will give you directions to the room, but you should only come a few at a time, otherwise someone might get suspicious" She looked around "Are there any questions?"

"What do we do if we get caught?" Colin asked.

"Stun the teacher and run away" Fred said with a smirk, but Ginny shushed him.

"Tell them this was your first meeting, and that Ron and I arranged it, and that they should see us" She saw the looks of disbelief on their faces "Trust me. We will make sure you don't get in any trouble" She looked around again "No more questions?" She waited, then turned to Ron.

"Good. We will see you all next Wednesday for our first meeting"

xoxox

"We have something to tell you" Sirius glanced across at Susan, who nodded "We have found the location of one of the twelve"

“Really?” Sally asked in surprise “Why didn't you tell me?”

“I thought it would be better telling you all at once” He replied “But, before we tell you the details, we wanted to make sure that you wanted to know”

“Why wouldn't we?” Hermione asked, but Harry held his hand up “Harry?”

“I think that they didn't really expect Draco to be at Malfoy Manor” Harry replied, not looking at his aunt and uncle “So they didn't think we would end up having to deal with an actual Death Eater” He turned to them “That's true, isn't it?”

“Yes, Harry” Susan nodded “We knew that Draco wouldn't be at The Manor when you attacked, and we were certain that Narcissa wasn't marked, even if she was somewhat sympathetic”

“But you think that...”

“Avery”

“Avery will be there, and we will have to deal with him” Hermione looked over at her friends “We will have to kill him”

“Yes” Sirius looked at them seriously “So – the question we wanted to ask is are you ready? Do you think you can kill him?”

xoxox

“That went well” Ginny and her brothers were the only ones left in the room “How many do you think will turn up?”

“I'd say most of them” Fred replied “Though Zach Smith didn't seem all that enthusiastic”

“Have you decided about Harry and co?” Ron asked, glancing at Ginny.

“I still think it's too soon” George said, before Ginny could reply “Wait a few months – maybe until the new year”

“Why the new year?”

“We should know if Umbridge has caught on to us by then or not. If she hasn't, we can think about expanding our numbers then” George smiled “And we can see how Harry and Hermione continue to interact with our beloved professor – see if they are on her side or not” Ginny paused to consider this, then nodded.

“Okay - I will keep from asking Harry to get involved, even though this would be a perfect opportunity to get doing something with me that doesn't involve little Miss Perks at all” She sighed “I guess I will just have to find another way”

xoxox

“Do you think you can kill him?”

“Yes” Harry and Sally replied together.

“Why?”

“I looked up some history in my spare time” Sally said “Do you know how many people were killed in the last war? How many were tortured to insanity and death? How many children were sacrificed?” She waited, but no one responded “If we can stop the second war before Voldemort gets going...” She trailed off, then nodded “If killing Avery now, instead of a year from now, saves one life, then I will sleep better at night”

“I agree” Harry nodded “Draco murdered Cedric without a second thought, and all fourteen Death Eaters stood there while Voldemort tortured me before attempting to kill me. What if the next time they are in a circle, it is Susan? Or you?” He reached over and took Sally's hand “Or someone else?” They both turned to Hermione.

“What can I say? Voldemort doesn't believe I have a right to live, let alone go to school or be a part of this world. If the fourteen aren't stopped, along with Voldemort, then who will be next? Colin? Dennis? A ten year old who doesn't even know she is magical? A six month old baby?” She shivered “I can't sit by and do nothing when I know that evil – true evil – is out there. And if I don't stop them when I

could, then the ten year old girl, the six month old boy – their blood will be on my hands” She sat up straight “I don't like killing, but in this case it is the lesser of two evils”

Sirius and Susan stared at them for a moment, then they both nodded.

“Okay. Here is what we know”

xoxox

“Mr Potter, The Headmaster would like to see you”

“Yes, Professor. May I put my things back in the common room?”

“Give them to Miss Granger” McGonagall snapped, then turned away. Harry stared at her in surprise for a moment, then shrugged and turned to Hermione.

“I will see you back in the common room?”

“Okay” Hermione watched as the teacher and student walked away, then turned to Luna “That can't be good”

“You never know” Luna smirked “Maybe the Headmaster is going to make him prefect after all”

xoxox

“This is unacceptable Harry, and I believe you know why” Dumbledore glared down at his student “She can not be a part of your life any longer, and every day that passes will only increase the pain you will cause her when you finally come to your senses” He paused, waiting for Harry to respond “Aren't you going to say anything?”

“What do you want me to say?” Harry asked calmly.

“That you understand what your duty is. That you understand that, as the Heir to The House of Potter, your relationship with Harry has no future”

"I do understand that, sir. A lot of people have made it clear" He paused, then smiled "But I am only a child. I don't come of age for two years, and until then I can't see why it is anyone's business who I date"

"Even if you are only leading Miss Perks on?"

"Sally knows the situation as well as I do sir, and she is quite happy as we are" Harry stood up "Now, if that is all, I do have homework to do, sir"

"Very well – you are dismissed. But think on my words"

"And you think on mine, sir" Harry turned, and walked out of the office, leaving Dumbledore staring at the door in mild disappointment.

xoxox

"WHERE THE HELL IS SHE?" Harry slammed the portal shut as he came through, causing everyone to jump. He saw Hermione and Luna jump to their feet, but he waved them to sit down "Where is she?"

"She's up in her dorm" Luna replied "Would you like me to get her?"

"If you don't mind" Harry started to pace back and forth while Luna ran up the stairs. Hermione looked at him, but he shook his head. She frowned, but leaned back in her seat to wait.

A few minutes later, Ginny came bounding down the stairs, while Luna followed sedately behind her. While the blonde Ravenclaw sat down beside Hermione, Ginny ran over to where Harry was stood, smiling at him.

"You wanted to see me?" She asked, still smiling.

"Yes" Harry said in a flat voice "What do you think you are doing telling Dumbledore about my time in Hogsmeade?"

"Pardon me?" She stared at him in surprise.

“Stay the hell out of my life, Miss Weasley. I don't love you, and even if Sally had never been born, I still wouldn't love you. You and I are never going to be a couple – do you understand that?”

“Harry...”

“Save it, Weasley” He snapped “I love Sally, and nothing is going to change that. So find someone else to obsess over, because I am getting sick of your childish games” He span on his heel and stormed out of the common room, while Ginny stood in the middle of the room, staring after him.

Chapter 6 – Debts

“You really want to do this tonight?” Luna asked.

“No time like the present” Harry replied with a smile “And, to be honest, if we don't go tonight, I will just sit around the common room, thinking about things I don't want to think about” He looked over at them “So – we go tonight?”

“Yes” Hermione nodded “Although I do have one question?”

“Yes?”

“What excuse are we going to use for not going to the feast?” Harry and Luna stared at her, and then she dropped her head in to her hands and moaned “It's my job to invent the excuse, isn't it?”

“Uh-huh” They both smiled at her, then Luna added “But hey – you have another hour or so to come up with one”

“Swell” Hermione grinned, then looked around “Shall we go? If they aren't looking for us before the feast, we might get away easier”

“Okay” Harry took Luna's hand, and pulled her out of her seat “Shall we go visit Myrtle? It's been a while since we last saw her” The girls nodded, then the three of them turned and left the room.

xoxox

“Where's Gin?”

“I haven't seen her” Ron replied, looking up at his brother “Maybe she's in bed” Fred looked round.

“Oi! Alicia”

“What?” The chaser wandered over, smiling at George.

“Can you go check on Ginny?” George asked “She hasn't come down for the feast, and, come to think of it, we haven't seen her all day”

“Okay” Alicia smiled at the twins, then span round and bolted up the stairs.

“Should we owl mum?” Ron asked “I mean – if Ginny is ill, then mum would want to know”

“We don't know what the problem is” George replied “She could just be sleeping, or planning another DA meeting”

“She isn't” Alicia had come down again, looking serious “I think you should get Professor McGonagall, or Madam Pomfrey”

“Lic?”

“I can't wake her - I think she's unconscious” Alicia replied “And she's burning up”

“Fred – go get McGonagall. Ron – go to the infirmary” George turned, eyeing up the stairs to the girls' dorms “Lic – can you levitate me up there?”

“Okay” While Fred and Ron ran out of the room, she withdrew her wand, and slowly levitated George up to the girls' dorms.

xoxox

“Greetings!” Myrtle flew over the heads of the three students, then back again “Happy Halloween to you all!”

“And to you, Myrtle” Hermione nodded.

“You are here to prepare?” The ghost asked, floating to a stop in front of them “I can deny ever seeing you, you know”

“That would be helpful” A voice came from behind them, and they all turned to see Sally standing there, with a slight smile on her face “So – are we going to go kick some Death Eater ass?”

xoxox

“MADAM POMFREY!” Ron tore in to the infirmary to find the Healer sitting by the bedside of one of the third years.

"Mr Weasley – kindly do not raise your voice in my hospital wing"
Pomfrey stood up "Now – what can I do for you?"

"My sister is ill – she has a temperature, and she won't wake up"

"Where is she?"

"In her dorm" Ron replied "Please – hurry"

"Very well" She turned and went in to her office, then returned, carrying her bag "Lets go"

xoxox

"Luna – you need to go back to the feast" Sally said seriously "They are going to notice that Minnie and Harry are missing, but if you are there you might be able to distract them" She paused "And people will be less suspicious of you if you are there when we do... when we are gone"

"Okay" She smiled at them "Take care – all of you. I want to see you when you come back"

"We will do our best" Harry replied with a smile, then, impulsively, he leaned over and kissed her cheek.

"See you later then" She gave a small wave, then turned and skipped out of the bathroom. The three students watched her go, then Harry turned to the others.

"Do you think she'll be okay?" He asked softly.

"She'll be fine" Sally replied, then glanced at her watch "We should be going. It'll be dark in around half an hour, and we should be in place before sundown"

"Okay" Hermione said "Are we going to go via The White House?"

"No" Sally replied "We are going straight to Avery Manor - I have the portkeys here" She handed the other two a bottle of water each "It's

the bottle that's the portkey. You can still drink the water if you need it"

"Okay" They both nodded, then Hermione turned to Myrtle "Myrtle?"

"Yes Minnie?"

"We will see you when we get back"

"I will leave a candle in the window" The ghost smiled at them "Good luck"

"Thank you" Sally replied. A moment later, Myrtle was all alone.

xoxox

"I am at a loss, Albus" Pomfrey stared down at Ginny, shaking her head "She has a fever, but she shows no sign of infection. She is asleep, but not resting. I have run every test I can think of, but nothing is showing up" She sighed "There's nothing I can do for her"

xoxox

"That's Avery Manor" Sally pointed down the hill to a building nestled in a small recess "According to Romulus, Avery has a wife and two kids, and they should all be at home"

"Kids?" Hermione looked across at her in surprise "There are kids?"

"Yeah" Sally nodded "I don't know if his wife is marked or not, but I am pretty sure they aren't, so we have to remove them before... before"

"This should be fun" Harry said with a wry smile "Anything else you can tell us to make it even more fun?"

"No – that's pretty much it" Sally replied with a beaming smile "I mean – unless you'd like me to conjure you two blindfolds and tie your hands behind your backs?" Harry and Hermione glanced at each other for a moment.

“Nah - I think we can manage without them” Hermione replied with a smile. She looked over at the horizon “It's nearly sunset”

“Yup” Sally nodded “Once it goes dark, we can transfer to just inside the wards, and then attack from in there”

“Why not now?” Harry asked, then, seeing the look on his girlfriend's face, he added “I am just curious”

“If we go now, we risk being seen, or casting shadows and such” She gestured to where the sun was just about touching the land “We go once it's dark”

xoxox

“Ah – Horace, Filius, Pomona. Thank you all for coming. We have a problem on our hands – Miss Weasley is gravely ill, but there does not seem to be a reason for it – at least not one that Poppy can determine” The Headmaster looked at the Heads Of Houses “I was hoping that you might have more luck”

xoxox

“Okay – it's time” Sally said quietly “And besides, one more round of the market game and I think I might have had to brain you both. A quintessential quadruped quisling quixotically questioning quantum quadrangles?” She glared at Hermione, who smirked back at her “Anyway – on three”

xoxox

“Lucy?” Elijah Avery looked up as the door to his study opened, expecting his wife to come in. What he saw were three youngish people, all aged around 18 “Who the hell are you?”

“We are friends of your wife” The first – a girl with bright red-hair and hazel eyes – replied “We came by to ask if she wanted to go down the pub”

"She never mentioned anything to me about it" He stood up, and started to reach for his wand. But before he had moved his hand halfway, he noticed a red beam of light shooting towards him.

"The pub?" The girl with silver hair and deep black eyes turned to face her companion "That's the best you could do?"

"It worked, didn't it?" The first girl smirked, then turned to the third of the group – a boy with blonde hair and blue eyes "Rick – check his arms. Mir – keep a look out"

"Yes boss" They both replied, then the boy walked over to where Avery's body was slumped and pushed up his sleeve "It's there" He turned back "Do you want to..."

"Want' might be the wrong word" She walked over to the Death Eater, then slowly pressed her wand to the back of his neck "May whatever god you believe in have mercy on your soul" She paused "Reducto"

xoxox

"STUPEFY!" The silver haired girl stunned Lucy Avery as she came down the stairs, then followed her spell with a levitation charm to prevent the unconscious woman from falling down the rest of the steps.

"Good job" The red-head came out of the front room and over to where they were stood "If you can keep watch, I will check her arms" She leaned over, and pushed the left-sleeve up, then sighed "Damnit"

"No mark?"

"No – she is marked" There was a pause "I just didn't want to make her kids orphans if I could avoid it"

"Then let me"

"Are you sure?"

"No Summer, I'm not. But you have already dealt with their father" Before Sally could respond, Hermione knelt down and placed her

wand at the back of Mrs Avery's neck "May whatever god you believe in have mercy on your soul" She paused, then continued "Reducto!"

xoxox

"I have cast the preservation charm" The boy said, coming out of the front room "His body will survive the explosion"

"Okay" Sally nodded "If you can do the same for Mrs Avery, then we will go and find their children. Once we know they are safe, we will search the rest of the house"

"Yes boss" Harry leaned over and cast a stasis charm on the body of Lucy Avery, then levitated it in to the front room, next to her husband.

xoxox

"Professor Dumbledore" Flitwick's voice broke the silence in the infirmary "I think I might have an answer as to what is wrong with her"

"Indeed?" Dumbledore strode over to where Ginny was laying in bed "Do continue"

"As Poppy said, there is no sign that anything external has caused this" Slughorn said, staring down at the young girl "No disease, no infection, no curses or hexes"

"So we looked for something else" Pomona said, then turned to Flitwick.

"We think it is her own magic that is doing this" The small professor said. Dumbledore raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Why?"

"We don't know" Professor Sprout replied "And it should be impossible, but it is the only thing that can explain what we are seeing" She looked over at Flitwick and Pomfrey. The Healer nodded.

"A scan of her magical index shows figures that would be way above normal if she were awake – for someone of her age, who is

unconscious, they are off the scale” Pomfrey looked worried “For reasons I can't explain, her magic seems to be burning out, and causing the symptoms you see here” Dumbledore paused, considering what he had been told.

“And, I suppose that if you can't explain it, you can't fix it?” He wasn't surprised when they all shook their heads.

xoxox

“Mum?” Adam Avery sat up in bed as someone came in to his room
“You're not mum”

“No, I'm not” Sally replied in a soft voice “And I'm sorry”

“For what?” He asked curiously.

“I'm just sorry” She said, then she stunned him. He collapsed back on the bed without a sound, and she walked over to him quickly “It's nothing personal” She pushed up the sleeves of the t-shirt he was wearing, and smiled in relief when she didn't see any marks. She pulled back the covers, and levitated him out of bed. She looked around the room, then slowly guided him over to the door, and out on to the landing.

“Mir? You ready?” She glanced at the other bedroom, then smiled as the door opened and Hermione came out, levitating a young girl “She clean?”

“Yup” The silver-haired girl couldn't hide her smile, but wasn't really trying “I think we have to talk to Romulus and Janus when we get back”

“Oh yeah” Sally sighed “I know we said we would deal with everyone who was marked, but killing a child? I think that is beyond even my limit”

“Glad to hear it” Harry said from the stairs “I have searched the rest of the house – it's empty, and I couldn't find anything of much use”

“So we can go?”

“Yup”

“Okay. Mir? If we take these two outside, can you do your thing?”

“Yes boss”

“And what's with calling me boss?”

“You would prefer ma'am?” Sally paused to consider this, then shook her head.

“Boss is fine”

“Yes boss” Hermione smirked, then, as Harry took over the levitation of the Averages' daughter, turned, and started casting the spell to locate the centre of The Manor.

xoxox

“Richard? What's wrong?” Sirius jumped up as the ghostly image of his nephew appeared.

“Nothing. Avery and his wife are dead, but we don't know what to do with the kids”

“The Ministry?”

“Do you think Diggory would treat them as two orphans, or as the children of two dead Death Eaters?” Sirius paused then frowned.

“Good point” He paced back and forth, thinking. A few moments later, he turned back and sighed “The Ministry”

“Why?”

“Even if you take them somewhere else, they know who they are, and who their parents were. The Ministry will find out about them eventually and then we will be back where we are” He saw the figure of Harry nod “Put a note on them explaining the situation, and hopefully Diggory will be able to let his humanity side with his political expediency”

“Okay” Harry smiled, then vanished. Sirius stared at the space for a moment, then turned to the floo.

xoxox

“Kinglsey. Tonks”

“Yes boss?” The two aurors jumped up from their desks as Rufus Scrimgeour came in to the office.

“Two children just appeared in the DMLE, both stunned. This was pinned to their robes” He handed Tonks a note.

“These two children are Adam and Alison Avery. Their parents, Lucy and Elijah Avery, have been executed for being Death Eaters in league with Voldemort. Please take care of these children, as they have done no wrong and should not be blamed for the crimes of their parents. Signed, The Order of V” She looked up at Scrimgeour “Sir?”

“The children are still unconscious, and our healers say they should rest a little while yet. Madam Bones had ordered me to take a team to Avery Manor to see whether the rest of the note is true or not. Get your armour – we leave in five minutes”

“Yes boss!”

xoxox

Susan, Sirius, Viktor, Claire and Arnold were waiting for the three members of The Order when they returned.

“Welcome back” Susan smiled “I take it it all went well?”

“Yes” Sally nodded “We sent the two children to the DMLE, and left the bodies of Avery and his wife to be found by the aurors” She saw Sirius and Susan exchange glances “What?”

“There's something you should know” Sirius said, and Susan nodded “We didn't tell you this before you left, because we didn't want you to be thinking about it while you were in the field”

“Okay” The three students started exchanging glances of their own. Sirius, meanwhile, looked at Susan again, but she shook her head, and gestured for him to continue.

“Sally – when your father was killed, your mother kind of repressed the memory of the event. She was involved in the attack, but she took you and escaped” He watched the girl for her reaction, but she continued to stare at him “While you were growing up, she tried to forget about it, not wanting to bring up the past. But when Voldemort returned, she asked me if I could help her remember the attack, and who was responsible”

“And?” Sally asked, looking pensive.

“About a month ago, I helped her find out who it was” He paused “It was Avery”

xoxox

“I guess they were telling the truth” Tonks looked up at the flaming-red V that dominated the sky above the ruins of The Manor.

“Seems so” Kingsley replied. He turned to his boss “Do you want us to look for the bodies, sir?”

“Yes” Scrimgeour nodded, then pulled out his wand. He cast a few detection spells, and gasped.

“Sir?”

“The wards have only just collapsed” He looked past her to the remains of the building “The fire, and presumably the murders, took place while all the wards were still in place”

“How is that possible?” Tonks asked in surprise “Unless Avery knew who killed him?”

“I don't know” Scrimgeour shook his head “But lets see if they are dead first...”

“They are” Kingsley said. They both turned, to see him levitating two perfectly preserved bodies behind him “I found them almost at once. Someone cast a powerful stasis charm on them”

“Why?”

“My guess would be to make sure we saw this” He pushed back the sleeves on the bodies “They are definitely Death Eaters, sir” He then rotated Avery's body to show the hole in the back of their heads “And, from what I can see, they were executed quite humanely. Most likely stunned first, then their brains were exploded. They wouldn't have felt a thing, and would have died instantly”

“So we are dealing with professionals?” Scrimgeour asked.

“Or people who don't like killing, but dislike Death Eaters even more” He replied. Scrimgeour considered this for a moment, then nodded.

“Get a team here to see what they can find – magical signatures and so on” He glanced down at the two bodies “We'll take these two back to Headquarters, and decide what to do with them there” He looked back up the giant V and shook his head “And what we tell The Minister”

xoxox

Myrtle smiled as Harry and Hermione re-appeared.

“Did it go well?” She asked.

“It did” Harry said with a slight smile “And Sally got to repay a debt to her father”

“Pardon?” Harry smiled again, but shook his head.

“We will give you the full story tomorrow, but now we really should be going”

“Then I will see you tomorrow” The ghost waved as they left, then, smiling to herself, she vanished down through the floor.

xoxox

"I have something to tell you" Luna caught up with Harry and Hermione on the main stairs "And – you know – welcome back and go you for not being killed"

"Thank you" They both smiled at the girl's welcome "Now, what did you want to tell us?"

"I came by the hospital wing on the way up" She looked around "Ginny Weasley is really sick"

"Really?" Harry asked "What's wrong?"

"She has a severe fever, and she won't wake up" Luna replied, as they walked along the passage to the common room "Madam Pomfrey thinks that she won't last beyond the weekend"

Chapter 7 – Treason, Plot and Gunpowder

When Harry appeared in the lounge of The White House, Sirius sat up in surprise.

“I didn't expect to see you today”

“I know” Harry sat down next to his uncle “Something has come up, and we need your advice”

“Then you have come to the right place” He smiled, but his smile faltered as Harry didn't return it “Harry?”

“I need you and Sally to come to The Chamber as soon as you can. Hermione and Luna and I will be waiting for you” He stood up “Sorry - I have to get back”

“You don't want to wait for...” Sirius stopped as Harry vanished without another word “Well – that was odd” He said to himself, then he turned and walked over to the floo.

“Casablanca” He called out – quite why Susan had chosen to name her house after a muggle movie was beyond Sirius, but he had decided not to question it – and the flames burst in to life. He waited for a few moments, then called out “Anyone there?”

“Uncle Mike?” Sally's head appeared “What's up?”

“Harry says he needs to see us in The Chamber”

“He's there?”

“No – he left once he gave me the message” He saw Sally frown “I think he was in a hurry, sweetie. He didn't say goodbye – he just vanished”

“Oh” Sally gave a slight smile “Okay. Give me five minutes”

“Why...”

"Because I am still in my dressing gown, and The Chamber is drafty"
She smirked as he blushed, then her head vanished from the fire.

xoxox

"Hey honey" Sally appeared in The Chamber to see Hermione, Luna and Harry sat round a table. Harry turned, then stood up.

"Hey" He smiled at her, then waved them over to the table "Have a seat" Sally looked at him curiously, then shrugged and took a seat next to him.

"Are you alright?" She asked, resting her hand on his. He looked up, then nodded.

"Yes, I am fine" He leaned over and kissed her "But..." He glanced at Luna "When we got back last night, Luna told us a story. At least – she told us the start of a story. Then Minnie told us the middle of it"

"What about the end?" Sirius asked.

"That's why we are here" Luna said softly "We are trying to work out what the ending should be" She looked at Sally "And you – both of you – have a say in it" Sirius and Sally looked at each other, then turned back to the students.

"Then tell us a story" Sirius said.

"It's like this" Luna began.

xoxox

*"I came by the hospital wing on the way up" She looked around
"Ginny Weasley is really sick"*

"Really?" Harry asked "What's wrong?"

"She has a severe fever, and she won't wake up" Luna replied, as they walked along the passage to the common room "Madam Pomfrey thinks that she won't last beyond the weekend"

"Do they know what's wrong?" Harry asked.

"I heard Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey talking" Luna continued "From what I could gather, her magic is burning itself out at a tremendous rate, and the process is killing her"

"Do they know why?" Hermione asked "A curse? Dark magic? Could it be Voldemort?" Luna shook her head "How do they know?"

"After they worked out what was happening, they started looking for past cases of someone's magic rebelling against them" She stopped walking, and ushered them in to an alcove "The most common reason is to do with life-debts" She watched the reactions of her friends. Harry looked confused, but Hermione frowned, then looked up, staring at Luna in shock.

"You're kidding?" She asked, half-disbelieving, half-hopeful. But Luna shook her head "Oh my god. Do they know?"

"I don't know. Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey came out of the hospital wing, so I had to leave" She sighed "I didn't hear them after that"

xoxox

Luna stopped talking, and looked over at Sally and Sirius. Both of them were staring at her with similar looks of confusion. Luna turned to Hermione.

"Min?"

"How much do you know about life-debts?" She asked.

"The same as most wizards" Sally replied "If you save someone's life, then they are magically bound to you"

"Uncle Mike?"

"Pretty much the same" Sirius shrugged "The topic is barely covered in school, and I haven't done a lot of research since. I do know that the bond lasts until one of the two wizards dies, or until the one to whom the debt is owed releases the one who owes it"

“That's true” Hermione replied “And, unfortunately for Ginny, those are the only ways it can be broken”

“Why...”

“Because it is a life-debt that is killing her” Luna said with a sigh “If someone – Ginny in this case – violates a life-debt, then her magic will punish her”

“And the more heinous the violation, the more severe the punishment” Hermione finished.

“So the reason that Ginny Weasley lies dying in the hospital wing is because...” Sally trailed off, then she closed her eyes and sighed “Because she's the one who cursed me” She looked up, staring at Harry “She's the one who collapsed my magical core”

“Yes” Hermione nodded “And the problem is amplified because, by cursing you, she also injured Harry and me”

“And she owes you two life-debts as well” Sirius said, and Harry nodded. For a moment, they all sat in silence, then Sirius looked around.

“So – now you have told us the start of the story, and the middle of the story, I take it you want us to tell you the end?”

“She cursed Sally” Harry said “And although Min and I were affected, we both think that it is up to Sally as to what happens next”

“Thanks honey” She smirked at him “You always give me the best presents” She stood up, and started pacing back and forth “Is there any way to be sure?”

“There are a number of detection spells” Sirius said “You can show the status of a bond between two people – it will show a line between the two subjects, and the colour of the line depends on the strength of the bond”

“Okay” Sally nodded “Then this is what I want to do. First – we check that the life-debt she owes me is the cause of this” She glanced at her friends “We also check Harry and Minnie as well”

“And if it turns out it isn't?” Luna asked.

“Then we go our merry way, singing tra-la-la-la-la as we go” She said, causing a laugh “But if it is – if she is the one who cursed me – then...” She shrugged “I don't know” She sat down “Part of me says that she is getting everything she deserves. That she attacked me, and now she is paying the price”

“But the other part of you” Harry said, taking her hand “Says that she is a stupid, silly little girl who made a stupid, silly mistake” He smiled at her “And that, despite the pain and trouble she caused you, she isn't a Death Eater, and that you aren't going to stand by and do nothing while she dies” She nodded back at him.

“So which part is going to win out?” Luna asked.

“I don't know”

xoxox

“MADAM POMFREY!!” Myrtle glided in to the infirmary at top speed, looking for the Healer “I need help!”

“Myrtle?” Pomfrey came out of her office “What's wrong?”

“I need help” The ghost repeated.

“No offence, Myrtle, but you're dead. There isn't a lot more I can do for you”

“Not for me!” Myrtle bounced up and down in the air “Luna Lovegood tripped near my bathroom – she won't wake up”

“Okay” Pomfrey picked up her bag, then turned to follow the ghostly girl.

xoxox

"She's gone" Hermione said. Hiding under Harry's cloak, she had been keeping an eye on the matron's movements. Once she was sure the coast was clear, she projected herself back to The Chamber, where the others were waiting.

"Good" Sally looked at Sirius and Harry. They both nodded, and a moment later, all three of them appeared in the hospital wing just as Hermione walked in from the corridor.

"I think we have about ten minutes or so" Hermione said.

"Helga?" Sally called out "Can you seal the infirmary – make sure we aren't disturbed?" There was no reply, but the doors closed, then vanished from sight "Thank you" She turned to Sirius "Uncle Mike?" Sirius nodded, then turned to where Ginny was lying.

"Revelus animus Ginny ad Sally" He turned "It takes a few moments. The line will be green, yellow, brown, pink, blue or red" He paused, glancing back to where the line would appear "A blue line means there is no debt, a green, yellow or brown line show the varying strengths of the bond"

"And pink and red?" Harry asked.

"Pink means there was a bond, but it was broken" He replied "Red means that the bond has been violated" They all turned back, and a moment later a bright red line appeared between the two girls.

"Well – that was a surprise" Sally said sarcastically "Can you check Min and Harry?"

"Yeah" Sirius cast the spell two more times, then turned back "Two more red lines means all three of you would have to release her from the debt to save her"

"And if it is another colour we can leave the debt where it is?" Harry asked.

"Yes, but..." Sirius trailed off as two more red lines appeared.

"But what?"

"I was going to say that you would be better off breaking the bond to avoid this in the future but it doesn't matter now" He cancelled all three spells, then turned back to Sally "It's up to you"

xoxox

"Are you sure you are feeling alright, Miss Lovegood?" Madam Pomfrey was crouched over Luna as the young girl lay on the ground.

"Yes, I think so, Madam Pomfrey" Luna smiled up at the Healer "I don't know what happened"

"Well – you don't have a concussion, and you aren't seriously injured. I would suggest you return to your dorm, and get some rest. I will inform Professor Flitwick, and ask him to keep an eye on you" She held out her hand, and helped Luna up.

"Thank you" Luna smiled again, then turned and walked down the corridor to the main stairway. Pomfrey watched her go, then picked up her bag.

"Thank you for your help, Myrtle" She said, and the ghost gave a small curtsey.

"It's not a problem. I am always happy to help my friends" She replied, then shot up through the roof. Pomfrey watched her go, then shook her head.

"Strange girl" She said to herself, then turned back to the infirmary.

xoxox

"I, Sally-Ann Perks, do relieve you of the life-debt you owe me"

"I, Hermione Jane Granger, do relieve you of the life-debt you owe me" They both turned to Harry.

"She hurt you Sally. That's something I can't forgive"

"I know" Sally replied softly "But do you want the first life you take to be hers?" He looked at her, then shook his head "I didn't think so"

"I, Harry James Potter, do relieve you of the life-debt you owe me" The effect was instantaneous – Ginny visibly relaxed, and her breathing became regular and peaceful. Sirius quickly cast the revelation spell, and a minute later, three pink lines showed up.

"She's free of the debts" He said "And, if all goes well, her magic should now help her recover from the events of the past few weeks"

"Good" Sally said "Now – we really should be going, before Madam Pomfrey comes back and finds a big wall where her hospital wing used to be"

"Salazar?" Harry called out "Can you unseal the room?" Again, there was no response, but the doors re-appeared "Thank you"

"Lets go" Hermione said, and watched as the other three vanished. Casting a last look at Ginny, she closed her eyes, and transferred herself to The Chamber. When she re-opened her eyes, she saw the others waiting for her "They are going to wonder why she got better you know"

"I know" Sally nodded "But let them wonder – we have done our part"

"You two should get back. Luna will be waiting for you, and with everything we have done in the past two days, Dumbledore might well be looking for you as well"

"Okay" Harry leaned over and kissed Sally "I will see you soon sweetie"

"Yes, you will" She turned and hugged Hermione, then stepped back "You should both take care, and watch out for Luna as well"

"Why?"

"Her attack was well planned and well executed" Sally held up her fingers and started counting "She knew when I would be coming up to the dorm. She silenced the room so I wouldn't hear her moving, or hear her cast the spell. She knew she had enough time to make it look like I was asleep, so no one would find me until the day after. And she has covered it up so well that, for the past five months, no

one even suspected her” She stared at them seriously “If she can do all that, you have to wonder what else she can do”

xoxox

Dumbledore walked up to the infirmary, and gently pushed the doors open.

Five minute before he had received a very strange call from Poppy Pomfrey. She had appeared in his fireplace, told him that Ginny Weasley's condition had changed, then disappeared before he had a chance to question her.

Fearing the worst, he had set off for the hospital wing at once.

But now, as he pushed the door open, he heard the sound of laughter echoing through the room. He stepped through the door, and stopped in surprise at the sight in front of him.

Ginny Weasley was sat up in bed, smiling and looking the picture of health. Sat round the bed were her brothers, while Poppy was pottering around in the background.

“Headmaster? Are you alright?” Ginny asked, noticing him in the door.

“Yes, Miss Weasley” He replied, walking in to the room “I am pleased to see that you are recovering from your illness”

“Thank you, Headmaster” Ginny beamed “My parents have asked if they can visit later - I hope that's okay?”

“I am sure it will be fine” He stared at her for a moment longer, then nodded, and walked over to Pomfrey. She smiled, then gestured for him to follow her in to her office. When he did, she closed the door behind him “I believe congratulations are in order, Poppy. How did you do it?”

“I didn't” She said “I went out to deal with an emergency, and when I came back, she was awake, and her magic had returned to normal”

“But you don't know why?”

“Not a clue” She sighed.

“She will make a full recovery?”

“As far as I can tell, it is like she was never ill, Headmaster” She glanced towards the door “There is no trace of her fever, nor of what the magic did” Dumbledore gazed at her, considering the situation.

“What was the emergency?”

“Miss Lovegood – a fourth year Ravenclaw – tripped and knocked herself out. Myrtle came to find me, as it happened near her bathroom”

“But she is okay?”

“She is fine – it was just a bump on the head”

“Good, good” Dumbledore smiled “You are sure about Miss Weasley?”

“I am keeping her in overnight, but yes - I don't think there will be any more problems with her”

xoxox

“Sally?”

“Yes, Uncle Mike?”

“I have something to take your mind off today, if you want” Sirius sat down next to her “I have located another of the Death Eater Manors”

“Really?”

“Rookwood Manor” Sirius handed her a sheaf of parchments “He was a spy in the first war, and did a lot of damage to our side” She skimmed through the notes, then looked up at him.

“Why now?”

“Honestly?” She nodded “It will take your mind off Ginny, and what she might do next. And if we do two attacks in as many days, we might be able to scare the crap out of Voldemort” She giggled, then nodded again.

“Okay - I will get in touch with Harry and Hermione, and see if they can come home”

xoxox

“Myrtle?” Harry looked round as the ghost appeared “Is everything okay?”

“Oh yes” Myrtle grinned “I have a message from your girlfriend”

xoxox

The next morning, Luna skimmed through The Daily Prophet, then smiled at her friends.

“It seems that The Order of V has been busy” She said “The Prophet says that, in addition to the execution of Mr and Mrs Avery, Rookwood Manor was blown up last night” She continued to skim through the story “There were no casualties though, and no arrests”

“Wow” Harry replied “What did The Ministry say?”

“They are continuing their investigation” Luna read through the rest of the story “But they are being pressed as to why The Order has only targeted known Death Eaters so far, and whether The Ministry will punish them or not” She saw him open his mouth “Before you ask, Diggory hasn't made a comment on that”

“Typical” Harry smirked, then turned as there was a disturbance at the doors to The Great Hall. Ginny Weasley was walking in, followed by Ron and the twins “Oh joy”

“Regretting your choice?” Luna asked in a quiet voice.

"That depends where she sits" He replied with a smile. A moment later, he saw Luna and Hermione smirk as Ginny walked up beside him.

"May I sit here?"

"If you must" Harry replied, not looking up.

"Thank you" She sat down "Harry?"

"Yes, Miss Weasley?" He turned to stare at her.

"Now that I am well again, I have decided that I don't want to waste my time any more" She shivered dramatically "Madam Pomfrey said I was close to death" She gazed up at him "That's two times in four years that I have nearly died, and it is two times too many"

"I can understand that" He replied with a slight smile.

"Good. Then you will go to Hogsmeade with me in two weeks, won't you?" She stared up at him "I like you – a lot, and I think that with Sally in the situation she is in, you and I would make a good couple" She continued to stare at him, waiting for a reply "Aren't you going to say anything?"

"I know what you did" He said quietly, so that only she and the two girls opposite could hear.

"I don't understand..."

"She saved your life" He glared at her "Sally saved your life, and how do you repay her? By stripping her of her magic and getting her kicked out of school"

"I didn't..." She started, but he cut her off.

"You silenced the room, and lay in wait for her. Then you attacked her, stripped her magic from her, and then hid her to cover up what you did" He hissed "You can deny it all you want, but we know. And she knows as well" She gaped him "Nothing to say? Normally you are full of suggestions, comments and so on" He smiled "But I have to admit,

I prefer you this way" He paused "You hurt my girlfriend, and that is something I can not forgive. So stay away from me, and stay away from my friends"

"Harry..."

"I mean it, Weasley. If you hurt any of my friends again, I will not be so merciful" She stared at him for a moment, then stood up and ran out of the hall. Harry watched her go, then turned back to his friends "Do you think that will work?"

"No"

"No"

"Didn't think so" He sighed.

"But you have to look on the bright side" Hermione said with a grin.

"And that is?"

"Compared to TWS, Voldemort doesn't seem so bad, does he?"

Chapter 8 – Red and White, Green and Blue

“Okay – that's it for today” Ginny addressed the DA “You have all made a lot of progress, despite Professor Umbridge, and you should all be very proud of yourself” She saw the students in front of her all stand up a little straighter, and she smiled “This will be our last meeting before Christmas. The next two weeks will be busy enough without any more distractions” She turned to her brother.

“I know you can't practice over the holidays, but I want you to remember what we have learned, so that when you come back next term we can pick up where we are leaving off ” He looked around as everyone nodded “Lets break it up, and make sure you don't get caught” He walked over to his sister, and stood next to Ginny as the rest of the students left. Once they were gone, he closed his eyes, and a moment later the doors vanished. He opened his eyes, then smiled “Okay – we are alone. Are you going to tell me what's going on now?”

“What do you mean?”

“Ever since you got better, you have been quiet and distant. The only time you even come close to being your normal self is when you are here, teaching the others” He stared at her “Gin – tell me” She stared at the floor for a while, then sighed.

“The day after I recovered, Harry told me that he knew what I had done” She looked up at him “That I had cursed Perks, that I had covered it up”

“How...”

“I don't know” She shook her head “You were the only one who knew”

“What about Perks?” Ron asked “Could she have seen you?”

“No” Ginny shook her head “I made sure that I wouldn't be noticed” She paused “And if she knew, why would she wait so long to do anything about it? Why not tell Dumbledore, or Fudge at once and get me expelled?”

"I suppose" Ron nodded, then frowned "Do you think they have told anyone?"

"No" She shook her head again "If they had told anyone with even the slightest bit of authority, I wouldn't be in school"

"So what's the problem?" Ron asked "You got rid of Perks, you haven't been expelled..."

"He hates me" She looked him in the eye "He wants nothing to do with me any more. He won't talk to me, and any time I come close to him, or those tarts he hangs around with, they leave" She sighed "I've lost him, and any chance of the future I had with him" Ron opened his arms, and gave her a hug. After a moment, he let her go, and wiped her eyes.

"Okay. I know I am not the brightest member of our family" He smiled "Or even the brightest person in this room, but I have a plan"

"A plan?"

"Yes" He took a deep breath "For the moment, you have to let him go" He held his hand up at her expression "Hear me out" She glared at him for a moment, then nodded "You might have noticed that Harry is very protective of his friends"

"You don't say"

"At the moment, he is upset about what you did to Sally. Now, in time, he will see that it was for his own good, and that he will end up thanking you for what you did, but at the moment, he is angry, and he is taking it out on you" He smiled at her "And if you try to force him to forgive you, he will push you further away, until there will be no chance of him ever forgiving you"

"How long do you think it will take?" She asked.

"I don't know" He replied with a shake of his head "But he has only been away from her for a few weeks - since the start of term. Once we start the new year, and the OWLs grow closer, then he will be

more involved with school, and will have less time for her. I would wait to see what happens then”

“Okay. I will try”

“There's one more thing” Ron said “You have to not let him know that this is upsetting you”

“Sorry?”

“If I have noticed that you have been walking round the school like a thundercloud, then I am pretty sure he will have noticed as well. From now on, you can't be a sad little girl. You have to go back to your normal, cheerful self. Show him that you don't need him. Don't pine, don't moon and don't follow him around like a lost little puppy” He saw her glare at him “You know what I mean”

“I'll try” She said with an exaggerated sigh “Any other words of wisdom, brother of mine?”

“Not at the moment” He smiled “But if I think of anything, I will let you know” They both laughed, then turned and walked towards where the door should be.

“Ron?”

“Yes Gin?”

“Where's the door?”

“Ooops” He closed his eyes, and a moment later the door appeared
“Better?”

“Yes, thank you”

xoxox

Sally smiled as Harry appeared in front of her.

“Sorry I'm late” He said “I was summoned before the Headmaster again”

“And what did his Professorness want this time?” She asked with a smile.

“He asked if I knew anything about Ginny's illness, and her miraculous recovery. I said no. He asked if I knew anything about The Order Of V. I said no. He asked if I had thought about his previous comments about my future. I said no” He shrugged “It was a pretty quick meeting to be honest”

“You didn't tell him about Ginny?” She looked at him “Don't you think he should know what she did? What she is capable of?”

“I thought about it” He held his arms open, and she leaned against him “But then we would have to explain how you came to be at Hogwarts to release Ginny from the debt, and...”

“And that would just cause more problems than it solves” He felt her nod against him “Okay. So we protect her secret, as annoying as that is” She looked up “We are going to tell someone eventually though, aren't we?”

“Yes” Harry nodded “Once we are done with the war, and Voldemort is dead, we will ensure that she pays for what she did” He smiled “But that's enough about TWS – what would you like to do tonight?”

“Actually - I had an idea about that” She smiled mysteriously. Harry pretended to shudder.

“Why am I suddenly worried?” Her smile only widened.

xoxox

“Luna?” Hermione had been talking to Myrtle when the young Ravenclaw had come running in, a strange look on her face “What's wrong?”

“I think I've killed Dumbledore”

xoxox

Hermione appeared in Sally's front room and her mouth fell open in surprise.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" She yelled as Harry broke off from kissing a strange girl with black hair.

"Min..."

"Don't you Min me, Harry James Potter!" She smacked him around the head "Where's Sally? Does she know what you are doing? What were you..."

"MIN!" She turned, and saw the black haired girl smirking at her "I know that hitting my boyfriend can be fun, but if you will just give me a moment" Hermione watched as the strange girl turned, then picked up something from the desk behind her...

"What's she doing with Sally's amulet?" Hermione asked, then she shook her head in disbelief "The same thing she is doing in Sally's house with Sally's boyfriend, right?"

"And it only took you a few minutes" The black-haired girl smirked as she transformed back in to Sally "I can see why people think you are smart" She realised that Hermione was still staring at her in disbelief "Min?"

"You were projecting without the amulet!"

"Yes" Sally smiled.

"You got your magic back?"

"No" Sally shook her head, still smiling.

"Then..." She glanced at Harry, then back to Sally "Okay – I've got nothing"

"Madam Pomfrey was slightly wrong when she said I was not a witch" Sally said, taking Harry's hand "I do have some magic left, but it is not enough to do any active magic"

"Which is why you can still see Myrtle" Hermione nodded in understanding.

"Exactly" Sally smiled "So a few months ago, Viktor and mum started to see if there was a way we could use this fact to our advantage"

"I remember him saying something about it, but since he didn't mention it again, I assumed he hadn't"

"It just took him a little longer than he thought" Sally replied "I could tell you the whole process, and show you the maths and calculations, but, to make a long story less long"

"Too late"

"I have enough magic to hold a transformation, but not enough to power one. So, I can do this" She closed her eyes, then transformed in to Hermione "And then, if I remove the amulet" She took it off, and handed it to Harry "I can stay like this" She held out her wand "The only problem is I can't perform any spells. LUMOS" The wand stayed dark "And, if you scan me, I will show up as having no magic" Hermione pulled out her wand, and cast a diagnostic spell.

"That's pretty impressive" She said, staring at the copy of herself "According to this you are a muggle version of me" She watched as Harry put the amulet back around Sally's neck, then cast the spell again "And now... now you show up as a magical version of me"

"We haven't entirely worked out why or how this could be useful" Sally said, transforming back to her normal appearance "But I am sure we will figure something out" She suddenly shook her head "Did you come here to tell us something?" Hermione stared at her for a moment, then nodded.

"Luna put Dumbledore in the hospital" She said with a smirk.

"WHAT?" Sally and Harry yelled together.

"Luna put Dumbledore in the hospital" She repeated.

"WHAT?" Sally and Harry yelled again.

“Are you doing this on purpose?” She glared at them.

“A little, yeah” Sally smirked “But – how?”

“It seems that he found it suspicious that Luna would trip and fall, and so ensure that Madam Pomfrey was away from the infirmary, just when Ginny got better. So he decided to ask Luna what she knew”

“Okay”

“And when Luna told him that she knew nothing, he didn't believe her” Hermione gave another smirk “So he decided to use legilimency on her”

“Oh dear” Harry sighed “How bad is it?”

“About five seconds in, he sat bolt upright, yelled something about a moose invasion, then collapsed in to unconsciousness. Luna called Madam Pomfrey, and while he was taken to the infirmary, she came to look for me” She bit her lip “At first, Luna thought she might have killed him, but I took her back to the infirmary, and Madam Pomfrey told us he would be fine – he just needed some rest”

“Is Luna okay?”

“She's a little worried that Dumbledore might blame her, but she will be fine”

“Dumbledore shouldn't be using legilimency on students!” Sally yelled indignantly “If anyone will get in trouble, I think it will be him!”

“That's what I told her” Hermione replied “Anyway – I just thought you would want to know, so I am going to go back now”

“I'll be back in a moment” Harry said “We just need to talk to Uncle Mike and Aunt Sue about Saturday”

“Okay” Hermione nodded, then vanished. Harry turned to his girlfriend.

“Shall we?”

"We shall"

xoxox

Two days later, Professor McGonagall stood up in front of the school.

"Good morning" She looked around "Today's Hogsmeade visit has been allowed to go ahead, despite the continued attacks by this so called Order of V. However we will be increasing security a little, and there will be parts of the village that are off limits for your own safety. I expect everyone to follow the directions given, and anyone caught out of bounds will be punished. Is that clear?" She saw everyone nod in understanding.

"In other news, you will all be pleased to know that Professor Dumbledore has recovered from his accident, and he should be back with us tomorrow. He thanks all of you that have sent your best wishes, and he assures you that he will be fine" There was some scattered applause "The coaches will be here in half an hour, so you should all return to your dorms to get your cloaks and so forth"

Harry turned back to his friends as she sat down.

"Accident? That's the story he is telling?" He asked in disbelief.

"Why does this surprise you?" Hermione replied "After all – if Sally can have an accident that strips her of her magic, Dumbledore can have an accident that puts him in the hospital for four days" She glared up at the table again "And I am sure that, if there had been fewer witnesses, everyone would think Cedric's death was an accident as well" She glanced at Luna "There is an upside though"

"If he is claiming it is an accident, rather than a deliberate attempt at mind rape, then he can't do anything to Luna" Harry smiled "Which I suppose is good"

"What could he do anyway?" Hermione asked "Admit what he tried to do?"

"No" Luna said "But since I can't be scanned, read or probed in any manner, he could make an argument that I am a danger to society"

She shrugged "He had Lucius killed because he was going to talk. Why not do the same to me cause I won't?"

"You think he would..."

"I don't know" She shook her head "But I have been having odd dreams the past few nights – ever since he tried to read my mind" She tilted her head to one side "Dreams about him and Voldemort, when Voldemort was younger and not himself, so to speak" She saw them looking at her intently "Before you ask, I can't remember them well enough to tell you, but I am sure that he – Dumbledore – knew something about what Voldemort was doing, and decided not to act"

"He let Voldemort turn evil?"

"I don't know" Luna shook her head "It might be my mind punishing him for what he did – putting him in a role he never played. I can't be sure, and I can't let anyone else try to find out, because..."

"We understand" Hermione said, resting her hand on Luna's. Luna nodded in return, then stood up, withdrawing her hand.

"Come on. Sally and Viktor, and Aunt Sue and Uncle Mike will be in the village soon, and we wouldn't want to keep them waiting, would we?"

xoxox

"Our Lord believes that a demonstration is in order. This Order believes it can kill and destroy without punishment. We are to convince them otherwise in Hogsmeade today" The Death Eater looked at his companions "Don't kill, unless you have no choice. We don't want to start a war, after all" There were a few, dry laughs "Hurt them, torture them, but no killing. Make them see that when The Order strikes, we strike back. Make them fear us once again"

xoxox

"Do you think we should say something?" Sirius asked "I mean – maintaining their cover is one thing, but this..." He gestured to where

Harry and Sally were kissing "I am surprised they haven't been arrested yet"

"Oh let them be" Remus walked up behind them "They are young, and I seem to remember you and Miss Doyle..."

"Yes, well – maybe you are right" Sirius cut his friend off "Hello Remus"

"Sirius, Susan" Remus nodded in greeting "I know there was nothing planned, but I thought since it was a Hogsmeade weekend, I would come along and say hi" He looked over at the kids "Don't they have to breath now and then?"

"Can I help it if I like kissing my boyfriend?" Sally turned and glared at them, then smiled "Uncle Remus!" She ran over, and gave him a hug "You haven't been around in a while"

"I know, but work keeps me busy" He glanced over at Sirius and Susan "I do think I will be around more often over Christmas though"

"Yay!" Sally cheered, causing Remus to blush.

"Anyway – what are the plans for today?" He asked.

"Mostly buying presents, having a drink at The Three Broomsticks and..." He trailed off "Did you hear that?"

"What?"

"I thought I heard..." Before he could tell them that he thought he had heard the sound of apparition pops, the air was filled with the sound of screaming.

xoxox

"Remember what you were told" Snape said quietly to the others "Hurt, but don't kill"

"Yes, Severus" They replied.

“Then go – have some fun” He smiled as they spread out. A moment later, there was a small explosion in one of the shop fronts “Ah – this is the life”

xoxox

“Harry – take Luna and Remus and go right. Minnie – take Viktor and mum and go left” She turned to Sirius “Uncle Mike – you come with me”

“Yes boss” Everyone replied, and a moment later, they broke in to three groups. Sally watched as the other two groups crept off down the side streets, then turned back to Sirius.

“Shall we?”

“We shall” He smiled, then they both moved to the side of the street, and started heading towards where the screams were coming from.

“What's the plan?” He asked when they reached a corner.

“Stop them” She smiled.

“That's it?”

“That's it” She held up her hand, then whispered “Two. Do you want high or low?”

“High”

“Okay. On three” She saw him nod “Three. Two. One. Go!”

xoxox

Snape stared in disbelief at the scene in front of him. Most of the Death Eaters he had brought with him were down – either unconscious or injured. For the first five minutes or so, the attack had been everything he had planned, but then a counter attack had been launched from three sides. He hadn't seen who was responsible, but whoever they were, they were organized and well trained.

"The Dark Lord isn't going to like this" He thought, but then he sent a signal up in to the air, one that the others would recognise as the retreat order. He ducked behind a pile of crates and watched as, one by one, the others vanished – some under their own power, other via portkeys activated by their still conscious friends. When he was alone, he stood up, then ducked down again as two people came round the corner.

xoxox

"They're leaving" Harry said, as he, Luna and Remus came round a corner "I think we won"

"Go us" Luna said, waving a fist in the air.

"Wait" Remus paused, sniffing their air "Snape's nearby" The other two raised their wands, scanning the area for the location of their former potions professor.

xoxox

"Is that... Snape?" Hermione, Viktor and Susan peered round a corner to see a dark-robed figure crouching in the shadows.

"I think so" Susan replied. They ducked back behind the wall "Do you want to take him?"

"Yes" Hermione replied "If we can bring him back to Hogwarts, then the aurors can force him to admit what's going on" She peered round the corner, then froze.

xoxox

"I think they are all gone" Sally said, glancing around "We did good?"

"Yes" Sirius turned and smiled "We did very good"

xoxox

“Perks and Black” Snape smiled to himself as two people came in to view “This should be fun” He jumped up, raised his wand and yelled “AVADA KEDAVRA!”

xoxox

Harry watched in disbelief as the killing curse flew at his girlfriend.

xoxox

“NO!” Hermione leaped to her feet, but knew she would be too late to do anything.

xoxox

Sally turned at the shout, then fell over as someone knocked her to the ground.

xoxox

Sirius saw a black shape rise up from behind some crates. and a moment later saw it raise a wand and point it at Sally.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!”

Without giving it a second thought, Sirius flung himself at the young girl, bundling her to the ground. So intent was he on saving his neice's life that he didn't even feel the curse strike him in the back.

Chapter 9 – The Heir of the House of Black

Dumbledore came down to breakfast, but when he walked in to The Great Hall, instead of the usual hustle and bustle he was expecting, he found complete silence, with all the students staring down at copies of The Daily Prophet. He looked around, then walked up to the staff table at the top of the hall.

“Good morning, Minerva” He sat down next to his deputy “Is there something...” He trailed off as McGonagall handed him a copy of The Daily Prophet.

FIVE DEAD IN ORDER RAMPAGE ATTACK ON HOGSMEADE – ONE DEAD, SEVERAL INJURED

“What happened?”

“Yesterday, there was an attack on Hogsmeade” McGonagall said, looking out over the students “Minor property damage, a few injuries – none very serious”

“It said...”

“As the attack was breaking up, a group of students were near The Hogs Head” She paused “It was Mr Potter and his friends, including Miss Perks and Sirius Black”

“And?”

“According to several reports, Severus Snape threw a killing curse at Sally-Ann Perks” She shook her head “Sirius jumped in front of her, and took the curse instead”

“Sirius is dead?” Dumbledore said, then he looked around the hall “Where is Mr Potter?”

“Albus!” McGonagall frowned at him “Where do you think he is?”

“Oh” The Headmaster shook his head “Yes” He glanced down the hall again “I take it that Miss Granger and Miss Lovegood are with him?”

“They were all close to Sirius, so I thought it best – at least for a few days” He nodded in response.

“So what about the other headline?”

“Three manors, belonging to what The Prophet calls 'Members of High Society', but most of us would call Death Eaters, were attacked last night. All three were destroyed, and Crabbe, Goyle, Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan Lestranger are all dead” She paused “The Prophet is reporting it as a High Society Massacre, while The Quibbler is pointing out that all five had Dark Marks on their arms, that they were known Death Eaters from the first war and that the world is a much better place now that they are dead”

“What about Sirius?”

“Same thing” She shrugged “The Prophet is implying that he was punished for deserting the Death Eaters, while The Quibbler is saying that he died a hero, saving a young girl's life” She paused “And that the person who killed him was a person you repeatedly spoke for, and claimed as a friend” She faced him “Have you heard from him recently, Albus?”

“Not since the start of The Tournament, when he gave me the potion to confound The Goblet” Dumbledore replied “I thought he had gone undercover again, and would report back to me with information” He sighed “It seems that I might have been mistaken about Severus” He looked up as an owl flew across the hall, and then dropped a letter in front of him. He opened it, then turned to McGonagall with a smile “I have been invited to the reading of Sirius Black's will this afternoon. Perhaps I will get a chance to talk with young Harry about his future”

“Sorry?”

“With Mr Black's death, Harry will need a new guardian” Dumbledore smiled “I think that it might be time to bring Mr Potter in to The Order, Minerva, and I think I know how I can do it”

xoxox

Susan pulled the door closed, and sighed. Harry and Sally were asleep on the bed, and she didn't want to disturb them, at least until she had to.

"How are they doing?" Luna asked. After the attack on Hogsmeade, Susan had taken everyone back to The White House, and asked Eric, Claire and Arnold to come over, so that the whole Order was in a safe place.

"Not well" Susan sighed "Sally blames herself for Sirius' death, and is worried that Harry will blame her as well"

"He wouldn't do that" Luna replied.

"I know" Susan guided Luna away from the door "And she knows that as well. She just doesn't realise it yet" She glanced back at the door "I am worried that it will cause problems between them before they work it out" They walked down the stairs, and in to the front room where the other members of The Order were waiting. Hermione stood up, and walked over to hug Luna. Then she turned to Susan.

"We each got an owl" She said, holding up a letter "They are from Gringotts"

"I was expecting that" Susan nodded "As Head of one of The Seven Houses, his will has to be read within a day of him dying" She looked back up the stairs "The House of Black can not go without a named Heir for more than that"

"Do you think Harry is up to this?" Remus asked "Does he have to attend?"

"Yes" Eric held up a letter, then picked up another one "So does Sally" He handed the two letters to Susan. She looked down at the letters, then sighed.

"Does this mean what I think it means?" Luna asked.

"They are both named in the will" Susan nodded "And there are good odds that Harry has been named as Sirius' heir, so he will have to be there, otherwise one of the other Black descendants could make a claim" She frowned "And although Andromeda or Nymphadora might make good matriarchs, there is also the chance that it might go to the other sister, or her only son"

"Even though he is a wanted criminal?" Hermione asked, then answered her own question "Sirius was a wanted criminal and he was still the Head" She shook her head "They would really make Draco the Heir?"

"Welcome to the world of pure blood society" Eric said with a smirk "Present company excepted, of course"

"Of course" Susan replied with a smile. She looked down at the letters in her hand, then opened her daughter's "Okay. We have to be there at three o'clock this afternoon, so I will let them sleep a little longer"

xoxox

"No... don't..." Harry woke up as Sally cried out. He looked around for a moment, then turned to where Sally was lying next to him.

"Honey" He leaned over and kissed her "You are having a nightmare"

"I didn't... NO!" Her eyes shot open, wide with fear. She stared around, then, catching sight of Harry, she smiled and relaxed "Hey"

"Hey yourself" He smiled at her "Sirius?"

"Yeah" She shook her head, trying to clear her mind "He was blaming me. Telling me that if I hadn't been a part of your life, he would still be alive"

"You didn't kill him" Harry held her, stroking her hair "Snape killed him, on Voldemort's orders. Snape hated Sirius – ever since they were in school together"

"But he died saving me..."

“Snape would have killed him even if you weren't there” Harry said softly “And yes, he died to save you, but that doesn't make it your fault”

“So – you don't blame me?” She asked, and the fear in her eyes was plain to see. He smiled, then leaned over and kissed her.

“No, my love, I don't blame you” He lay down again, still holding her “I blame Snape, and trust me when I say we will ensure he pays for what he did to Sirius” He closed his eyes “And to you”

xoxox

“Nymphadora” Andromeda Tonks called out to her daughter “There is a letter for you” She looked down at the envelopes in front of her “And for me as well, apparently” She said to herself.

“Mother, if you are not going to let me change my name, could you at least call me Dora?” Tonks came down the stairs of her parents' house, and walked up to her mother “Is that too much to ask?”

“Yes” Her mother nodded “It is” She handed her daughter the letter, then opened her own. Skimming through it, her eyes widened. When she had finished, she looked over at her daughter “I take it yours is the same?”

“An invitation to Sirius' will reading?” Tonks asked, and her mother nodded “Why do you think he invited us?”

“I have no idea” Andromeda looked over at her, then up at the clock on the wall “We have about three hours before we are due” She turned back to her daughter “Do you want to go?”

“Yes” Tonks replied “If Sirius' last wish was for us to be there, how can I refuse?”

xoxox

“Harry?” Susan knocked on the door to his room “Are you awake?”

"Yes" A voice called back "You can come in" Susan smiled, then pushed the door open. She found the two still lying on the bed, holding each other.

"How did you sleep?" She asked.

"A few nightmares" Sally replied, not looking up "But Harry's helped me put them in perspective"

"Are you alright?"

"No" Sally shook her head "But I think I will be" She smiled weakly, then looked up at her mother "You are here to tell us we need to get dressed, and be ready to go out, aren't you?"

"I wish I could let you rest, but..."

"But Sirius' will has to be read within a day" She looked at her boyfriend "The House Of Black must have a Head, or an Heir. And it is most likely you who will be named"

"I am going to profit from his death?" Harry asked in horror.

"He's not the only one" Susan handed over the two letters "Sorry - I opened yours, just to check what was going on" As the two students looked through their letters, Susan continued "Every member of The Order received a letter this morning. I don't think that means they are all named, but I think that Sirius wanted everyone there"

"Do you know if anyone else has been invited?" Sally asked, looking up from the letter "Are we going to encounter Draco or someone else we want to... hurt?"

"There is the chance that Narcissa and Draco might turn up, but it's unlikely, given the situation" Susan replied "But given the whole Seven Houses thing, I expect that Dumbledore and Diggory will be there"

"You don't think Sirius..." Harry trailed off in disbelief.

“No” Sally shook her head, before her mother could reply “But Diggory is the Minister, and Dumbledore is the head of The Wizengamot, so they will have a vested interest in whatever happens today” She reached out and took Harry's hand “You going to be okay?”

“I'll be fine” He replied, then he glanced at Susan “When do we have to leave?”

“In about an hour or so” She replied “I talked to the goblin responsible for Sirius' estate, and he said that we can floo directly in to the lobby of the bank, to avoid any problems in Diagon Alley”

“Okay – we will be ready” Susan nodded, then turned and left. After she was gone, Harry turned back to his girlfriend “Are you sure you'll be okay?”

“Yes” Sally replied with a slight grin “In fact, I think that we might get some entertainment out of today after all” He looked at her questioningly “I am sure you will work it out eventually dear, but for now I will leave you alone to get ready. I will see you downstairs?” He nodded, then she kissed him, and walked out of the room.

xoxox

“Greetings” As Susan lead the other members of The Order in to the bank, they were welcomed by a goblin who bowed low “My name is Flintlock, and, for the past thirty years, I have been in charge of the estate of The House Of Black” Susan returned the bow.

“Thank you. I am Susan Perks, and these are my friends” She gestured to the group behind her “We wanted to thank you for doing this”

“It is my duty” Flintlock replied in surprise “I expect no thanks for doing my job”

“Never the less – we do thank you for making a difficult time, for all of us, less difficult”

"You are welcome" The goblin smiled at them "Now, if you would like to accompany me this way, I will take you to the waiting room" He glanced at the group "Are Sally-Ann Perks, Hermione Granger and Harry Potter present?"

"Yes" A girl at the back of the group raised her hand "We are here"

"Good. May I see the three of you in private?" He turned back to Susan "I realise they are not yet of age, but Mr Black left a message for the three of them, and I was asked that they hear it before the will reading" Susan paused for a moment, then nodded. Flintlock turned back to the three students "If you would like to follow me?" Susan watched as the group of four walked off to a private room, then turned back as she and the others were escorted down the hall, and in to the waiting room.

"Susan" Andromeda stood as Susan and her party came in to the room "I am sorry for your loss"

"And I for yours" Susan nodded in reply, then turned to the younger girl "Nymp..."

"Tonks" Remus interrupted "Sirius said that his cousin preferred to be called Tonks" He smiled at her "It is good to see you again"

"And you" Tonks walked over and hugged her "I can't believe he is gone"

"I know" Remus enfolded her in his arms. Susan watched with a slight smile, then turned and frowned.

"Professor. Minister"

"Mrs Perks" Dumbledore nodded in greeting "I was sorry to hear about Mr Black's death. He was a good man, and he will be missed"

"Yes, he will" Susan replied, then she turned to Diggory "What can you tell me about the investigation?"

"Investigation?" Diggory looked at her, mystified.

“Half a dozen Death Eaters attack Hogsmeade and you don't think there should be an investigation?” Susan asked in disbelief “Now, even given that the five Death Eaters who were killed last night might have been five of the ones who carried out the attack, that still leaves Severus Snape. Are you hunting for him?” She glanced at Dumbledore, then back to The Minister “Or has someone been telling you that Snape can be trusted, and that clearly this is an understanding?”

“Mrs Perks...” Diggory started to reply, but before he could continue, the door opened and a goblin came in.

“Sorry for the interruption, but I have been asked to take you to the conference room where the will of The Head of The House of Black will be read. In accordance with his wishes, and the wishes of Mr Potter, Miss Perks and Miss Granger, you are all invited to the reading, even though some of you are not named in the will” He bowed to Mrs Perks “If you would like to come this way?”

xoxox

“Thank you all for coming” Flintlock stood at the front of the conference room, addressing the group “In a moment, I will activate Mr Black's will. The various bequests and clauses in it will become active the moment the will is complete, however delaying the end of the reading will not negate any of the clauses” He turned and brought a bowl to the front, and placed it in the centre of the table. He pulled the cloth off the top, then opened it.

A moment later, the glowing figure of Sirius appeared.

“Well – if you are watching this, then it appears I'm dead. Or I am living in hiding with a dancing girl named Clarabelle. But, of the two, I think that my death is more likely. I can only hope that I died in a good cause, and that those I leave behind will remember me well” He paused, and looked around

“But – enough of that. Although most of you here don't want my money, nor my stuff, I have to give it to someone, because otherwise it will all go to Narcissa, Bella and Draco, and I will be damned if I am

going to let that happen” There were a few laughs from around the table.

“Okay. As the Head of The House of Black, I am expelling Narcissa Malfoy, Draco Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange. They no longer have leave to call themselves part of my House, and all the associated perks and privileges are stripped from them. However, I am also inviting Andromeda Tonks and her daughter back in to the family. Andy, Dora – if you see the goblins when we are done, they will let you know the full details. I am only sorry that I couldn't do this before now” He paused again.

“Remus, my good friend, I leave 20,000 galleons, and a small flat in east London. It is suitable for your special needs, if you will pardon the phrase. It is under fidelius, but the secret keeper will make them self known after we are finished. I know – you don't want my money, but you are a good man, and I won't take no for an answer” Remus blushed, and nodded.

“Miss Lovegood, Mr Krum – you have been good friends to my nephew and nieces, and while I know you did not do it for reward, I have no further use for the money, and I suspect that, if you survive The Coming Storm, you will put it to good use. So I leave you 50,000 galleons each, the details of which will be explained in due course” The two students smiled fondly.

“Claire, Arnold. To you I leave 50,000 galleons, partly for putting up with my nephew, even after he corrupted your daughter, but also for the loyalty and friendship you have shown us. The goblins will convert the money for you, since I think that your bank might have problems with you depositing wizard coins, not to mention what The Ministry might do. All I ask is that you use it for yourself, as your daughter will have no need of it” They both smiled at Hermione, and nodded.

“Susan. There are no words, and no actions, capable of doing justice to what you have done for me, and for my nephew. And, since I am gone, I suspect that you will be asked to do more than you had ever imagined. Although it will never be enough, I hope that 250,000 galleons I have left you will be of some help, along with the property

we arranged earlier” Sally took her mother's hand as Susan wiped her eyes.

“And so I come to my nieces and nephews. My three children, in truth, if not in fact. You have been my reason for living, for everything I have done, and I love you more than you will ever know. The next few months will be hard, I know, and no amount of money will make up for the pain and sorrow you will have to go through because of my death. Although, if I could have found a way to change that, I suspect I would have been a lot more rich than I was” There were some more laughs at this, and Sirius smiled.

“Harry, Sally, Hermione – to you I leave 500,000 galleons each. This will be put in trust for you, until you come of age, to be managed by someone of your collective choosing. I would leave you more, but, as current Head of The House, I must leave something in trust for my Heir and successor” He paused “Remember that where ever you go, my love goes with you. And that we will see each other again” The image froze, and the goblin stood up.

“There is one last part to the will, but if you would like a few moments to compose yourselves, you may take it” He was watching the three children, who all had tears running down their cheeks. Sally looked at the other two, but they both shook their heads.

“Thank you, Flintlock, but I believe we are able to continue” She said softly.

“Very well” Flintlock turned, and the image started again.

“Finally, I offer membership of The House of Black to Eric Lovegood, Luna Lovegood, Remus Lupin, Susan Perks, Sally-Ann Perks and Harry Potter” He smiled “This is your choice, and I will not force it on you. To accept, you need only tell the new Heir that you wish to join” He paused, then smirked.

“I never had a lot of time for politics – so many pranks, so many women, so little time. And even when I became the nominal head of house, I still didn't give much thought to the power I could wield in my position. But now that I am dead, I can fix my oversight, and hopefully The House of Black can be used to bring the wizarding world in to the

20th century, as well as play the largest prank in the history of the world” He paused again.

“So I, Sirius Lee Black, name Hermione Jane Granger as the next Heir to The House Of Black, if she will take the position. Minnie - I realise this is a lot to ask, but I truly believe that you will do this well, and that you will use the position you now have to make the world a better place” He smiled.

“Well – that's all I have to say. Take care my friends, and do not mourn. I am with Lily and James again, and we have no wish to see any of you for a long while yet. Live well, love well and be well” He waved goodbye, then vanished.

xoxox

“I can not permit you do this Miss Granger” Dumbledore stared down at her as she contemplated the parchment in front of her. She looked up at him.

“And how are you going to stop me, Headmaster?” She smirked “We are not in school – you have no authority over me”

“I am the Head of The Wizengamot. I can ensure that this has no weight in law”

“Is that true?” Hermione turned to Remus and Susan.

“If you don't sign it, then yes. He can revoke it” Susan smiled “But once you sign it – once you become the Heir to The House of Black, The Wizengamot won't dare to challenge it” She turned to Dumbledore “Will they?” When he didn't reply, she smirked “I thought not” She turned back to Hermione “Sirius obviously believed in you, Min – so it's your choice” Hermione looked up at her.

“Do you really think I can do this?”

“Yes” She smiled “And I think that you will be very good at it” Hermione stared at her for a moment, then turned to Dumbledore.

“Why do you think I shouldn't?”

"It is too much responsibility for someone so young. You are not prepared for politics, Miss Granger, especially not at this level"

"But I am not of age" She smiled "So, until I turn 18, I can appoint a regent to take my place" She glanced at Remus "Can't I?"

"You can" He nodded. She smiled back at him, then she picked up a quill and signed the parchment, then turned back to Dumbledore "Anything else, Headmaster?" Dumbledore frowned at her, then turned to Harry.

"Mr Potter – once we are finished here, you will return to Hogwarts with me, and then travel to the Weasleys for Christmas"

"Pardon me?"

"With Mr Black's death, you are left without a guardian. I have spoken to Arthur and Molly, and they have agreed to take you in for the time being, while a suitable choice can be made for a permanent guardian" He smiled at Harry "I am already in contact with your aunt about you moving to live with them"

"Professor Dumbledore" Susan said with a smile "Perhaps you should read this" She handed Dumbledore a parchment. He stared at her, then looked down and started to read. A moment later, he handed it to Diggory. The Minister read through it, then handed it back with a shrug.

"It seems in order, Dumbledore"

"So, Headmaster, I will not be leaving with you today" Harry smiled "But thank you for your concern" Dumbledore glared at him, then turned and stalked out of the room, with Diggory trailing behind him. Once they were gone, and the door was closed, Harry turned back to his girlfriend "You were right – that was pretty entertaining"

Chapter 10 – Christmas Woes

“Are you sure we have to do this?” Sally looked up at her mother
“Harry grew up here – he has never lived anywhere else”

“I know” Susan replied sadly “And I don't want to take him away from here any more than you do. Especially not so soon after Sirius' death”
She looked around “But the secret will start to fade soon, and we need to be gone before it does”

“Okay” She nodded “Do you want me to tell him?”

“I already know” Harry said from behind them “The charm was bound to him, so it made sense that once he died, the charm would die with him” He looked around “I am surprised it held up this long”

“He was good at what he did” Susan replied with a smile “Are you ready to leave?”

“I have got everything I need” Harry nodded “Where are we going?”

“I will tell you that when we get there” Susan said with a grin. Harry looked at Sally.

“Don't you know?”

“I do” She said “But I can't tell you”

“Why not?” He asked in surprise, then nodded “Because you aren't the secret keeper”

“No” She gestured to her mother “Sirius thought it best”

“Okay” He gave her a quick hug “I will go and get my trunk, and then we can leave” He walked out of the room, then walked up stairs.

xoxox

“Aunt Sue, Sally” Harry held up his hand after they had walked out of the house “There's one more thing I have to do”

“What's that dear?” Susan turned, and saw him with his wand in his hand “Are you sure?”

“Without him, it is just a house. It's not a home any more”

“So why...”

“Because I am not going to let Dumbledore or Voldemort take it. And I am not going to let the press ransack it for a story” He pointed his wand at the house “Would you like to help?” The other two paused, then they raised their wands as well. Harry smiled, then looked back at the house “Sirius, my father, this is for you” He paused, then, together with Sally and Susan, he yelled “INCENDIO!”

xoxox

Five minutes later, Sally and Susan appeared in front of a row of houses. Five seconds later, Harry appeared next to them.

“Harry, what do you see?”

“A row of houses” Harry replied.

“Good” Susan handed him a piece of paper “Read this, then destroy it” He smiled, then looked down at the parchment 'The headquarters of The Order Of V is at Number 12, Grimmauld Place'. He looked up and then took a step back in surprise.

“Impressive isn't it?” Sally smiled.

“It's amazing” He watched as two houses parted, and another one faded in to view in between them “I take it that is Number 12?”

“Yes” Susan replied “Not only our new headquarters, but it is big enough to house all of our families until the war is over, one way or another”

“Really?”

“Viktor, Hermione and her parents are here already. Luna and Eric will be here later this evening. And there is a basement for Remus

when he transforms” She smiled at him “I won't say it is entirely impregnable, but it is the safest place we have at the moment” She looked around “Speaking of which, we should really get inside”

xoxox

“Do you think they will realise they have a room each?” Hermione watched Sally and Harry run up the stairs.

“Probably not” Susan smiled “But if he can take away her nightmares, then I don't really mind where he sleeps” She turned to Hermione “So – how are you holding up?”

“I am okay” She said, then, at Susan's look, she shrugged “Okay - I am not okay. I have known him most of my life, by one name or another – it's going to take some time to get used to him not being around any more” She smiled “But I will, eventually”

“Good” Susan gave her a hug “Now – go spend some time with your boyfriend”

“Yes m'am” Hermione smiled, then turned and walked in to the living room.

xoxox

“I'm sorry, Albus, but there is no way to overturn this” Diggory was in his office, facing the Headmaster. He gestured to the custody documents “Minister Fudge filed them over a year ago, signed by both parties and a witness” He looked back up to Dumbledore “You should have made any challenge to it then”

“How could I when I knew nothing about it?” Dumbledore snapped “Is there no way to get Harry away from Mrs Perks?”

“No, you can't” Diggory replied “Now, have you found anything we could use to overturn Black's choice of Heir?”

“Yes, but it would require a miracle” Dumbledore sighed “Now that she has been named, Miss Granger is the Heir to The House Of

Black. The only way to change that is to get The Wizangamot to vote that Black erred, and that that portion of the will can be voided”

“But... they would never do that” Diggory said “It would mean that any of their wills could be voided in the future”

“Exactly” Dumbledore smiled grimly “That's why Remus told her to sign it. He knew that the rest of the older families, and especially the other Five Houses, would never overturn it, even though it means putting a muggle-born in a position of unprecedented power”

“Was Black always this smart?” Diggory asked “Or did someone put him up to this?”

“I think this was all his own work” Dumbledore replied “He and James – they were the sneaky part of the group. Remus was the brains, and Peter... I don't know what Peter was. But I have no doubt that Black planned this all on his own” He looked up at The Minister “And he was right – Miss Granger, as The Heir, will have the potential to recreate the world as a much better place” He paused “At least, from a certain point of view”

xoxox

The occupants of Grimmauld Place passed Christmas quietly. Harry had convinced Susan that, while he wasn't in the mood for a massive party, he thought they should at least try to enjoy the holiday as best they could.

“I suspect that, when I return to Hogwarts, we will have precious little time for parties, or fun of any kind”

They exchanged presents, and spent Christmas night telling nostalgic stories about their own lives, and sharing their memories of Sirius.

“The first time I met him, I didn't realise of course” Hermione said with a smile “Harry brought a dog named Lucky over to my house, and we went for a run in the park” She cast a sideways look at Harry “Apparently he told Sirius that asking a girl to walk your dog is a good way to make friends” She couldn't help laughing when Sally, who had just been taking a drink, started coughing.

"That's exactly what he did!" Harry said "And I still don't get why" Sally, who had put her drink down, exchanged looks with Hermione.

"You never told him?"

"It never came up" Hermione replied, then blushed and added "If you will pardon the phrase" Sally smirked at her, then leaned over and whispered an explanation in her boyfriend's ear. As she went on, he got more and more red. When she finished, he turned and glared at Hermione, who simply smirked back at him. He glared for a moment longer, then smiled back at her.

"Well – that explains a lot of the jokes he made the day after"

xoxox

Later that night, Harry, Sally and Hermione were sat by the fire. Everyone else had gone to bed, but Harry had asked the other two to stay behind for a moment.

"I've made a decision about what I want to do, after we defeat Voldemort" He said "But since it will affect you two more than the others, I thought I would run it by you, and see what you think" He watched them both nod, then he smiled "Okay. This is what I was thinking..."

xoxox

"Good evening, Arthur" Dedalus Diggle nodded as Mr Weasley closed the door to the room behind him.

"Evening" Arthur looked around.

"It's been quiet all afternoon" Dedalus said "I don't think anyone comes in here any more"

"That's good" Arthur replied "Molly worries enough about me doing this without the added worry of what happens if I am caught"

"Mine too" Diggle smiled in reply "But you know that Dumbledore doesn't want Digory to know about the prophecy"

"I know, I know" Arthur nodded "You should go, my friend. I will be alright"

"Have a good night, Arthur, and you will be relieved in the morning"

xoxox

The two girls stared at Harry, both lost for words.

"So – that's what I was thinking" He said, then looked at his watch "I wasn't expecting an answer, or indeed anything. I just thought that you two should know" He stood up "I am going to bed. See you in the morning" The two girls watched him go, then Hermione turned to Sally.

"Is he serious?"

"I think so" Sally nodded "And I think I agree with him"

"Strangely, that is less of a surprise" Hermione replied with a smile "I mean – between the two of you, I would say you were the more likely" She yawned "Sorry. Maybe Harry had the right idea"

"I will be up in a while" Sally said "Sleep well"

"You too" Sally turned back to the fire as Harry left, staring in to the flames. The plan Harry had suggested had a lot of merit, but it would be a big change. And it wouldn't be easy – there would be an uproar when it became public, and there would be any number of objections from any number of people.

"But" She thought "Nothing that is worth doing is easy" She lay down, and continued to stare in to the flames.

xoxox

It was the faintest of clicks, but it caused Arthur Weasley to spin round in surprise. He looked at his watch, and shook his head. No one should be here at this time of the morning.

“Except me, of course” He thought, then he looked around again. Dumbledore had cautioned him against using excessive magic, in case it was picked up by the night-watchmen at The Ministry, but the spectral light in The Hall was creeping him out a little.

“Lumos” He turned, holding his wand out in front of him, looking for whoever had come in a few moments before. But, finding no one, he turned, and walked back down the aisle to his previous location. He looked at his wand, about to extinguish it, but then he heard a noise. A slight chink of glass on glass, as if two of the smoke filled orbs had been knocked together.

He turned, holding his wand up, then stopped. A black shadow was slithering across the floor, heading slowly, but surely, towards him.

He took a step back, but then froze in terror as the shadow reared up, slowly resolving itself in to the shape of a giant snake. It swayed in the air in front of him for a moment, then, as he watched, unable to move, its head shot forward...

xoxox

“What the hell?” Susan sat bolt upright in bed as the sound of screaming filled the house. She jumped out of bed, and threw her door open. As she looked out in to the hall, she saw the others leaning out of their rooms.

“Aunt Sue?” Luna called out “What's going on?”

“I don't know” Susan replied, but there was another scream, and they all turned.

“It's Harry” Viktor said, walking down the hall towards her. But then he turned as another scream ripped through the air “Minnie!” He turned, and ran to Hermione's bedroom, while Luna and Susan went towards Harry's. Susan pushed the door open, and went over to his bed.

“Harry” She shook him, but he didn't wake up. She turned as Luna came up behind her “Find Sally – she isn't here”

“Okay” Luna turned and left the room, then pushed open the door to the room opposite. As she thought, the bed was empty. She sighed, then turned back and towards the stairs.

xoxox

“Minnie. Wake up” Viktor shook his girlfriend softly “You are having a dream”

“Snake! Weasley! Hippo!” Her eyes shot open “We have to save him! He's going to die!” She stared up at him, then threw herself in to his arms “We have to save him!”

xoxox

“Susan?” Harry opened his eyes, surprised to see his aunt bending over him “What... what...”

“You were having a nightmare, dear. You screamed loud enough to wake everyone in the house”

“Sorry” He still looked a little dazed “A snake bit me. Kind of surprised me”

“A snake bit you?”

“Yes” There was a voice from the door. Hermione came in, leaning on Viktor “But the snake bit Mr Weasley, not you” Harry looked at her, confused, then nodded.

“Yes. Yes!” He sat up “Mr Weasley was in a room with a lot of...”

“White orbs. I think it was at The Ministry” Hermione continued, then suddenly stopped, staring at Harry “Where's Sally?”

“I don't know” Susan replied “Luna went to look for her...” They all turned as there was another scream “I guess she found her” She helped Harry out of bed, then the four of them went out of the room, and found Claire, Arnold, Remus and Eric already heading downstairs.

A few moments later, they found Luna holding Sally's head in her lap, stroking her hair.

"She woke up a few moments ago, then screamed" Luna said softly "She won't tell me what's wrong, but she seemed to be having a terrible nightmare"

"Mr Weasley was bitten by a giant snake" Harry said, walking over to where his girlfriend was lying. He sat down next to her, and took her hand "You are safe, sweetie. It was a dream, and it can't harm you" He felt her relax, then he saw her smile "Did you see the same thing?"

"Yes" Sally replied in a quiet voice "He's going to die, isn't he?"

"Unless we go and save him" Hermione said.

"Why not tell Dumbledore? Arthur is a part of The Order of The Phoenix" Remus said "Albus should be able to do something"

"How do we explain how we know?" Harry turned to him "If we tell him about the dreams – about these visions – what do you think he will do?" He saw Remus consider this, then the older man nodded.

"Okay. But how are you going to get to... wherever he is?" Eric asked "Do you even know where he is?"

"The Hall Of Prophecies" Luna said "In The Department of Mysteries" They all turned to her "My mother went there once, as part of her work" She looked at Sally "You have been to The Ministry?"

"Yes – back when Sirius returned to public life" She replied.

"I can give you directions from there" She glanced at Harry and Hermione "Although I think you should change first – you might draw attention to yourselves dressed as you are"

xoxox

"I think we need a bigger cloak" Harry said. The three of them had appeared at the end of a corridor, and Harry had thrown the

invisibility cloak over them. It was only after they started moving towards their destination that they realised the cloak didn't cover their feet.

"Or we need to stop growing" Sally replied "I told you that you shouldn't have had that third helping last night"

"Very funny" He looked around "Any ideas?"

"Disillusionment" Hermione replied, then she pulled out her wand. A moment later, they were all invisible. Harry pulled the cloak back off, and folded it up and slipped it in to Sally's bag.

"Okay. Lets go"

xoxox

"Is there anything you can do?" Sally crouched next to Mr Weasley, watching as Hermione scanned him.

"I can give him a blood-loss potion, but he really needs a healer" She replied "Can we get him out of here?"

"Give him the potion, then drape the cloak over him. Richard and I can levitate him out, while you go ahead and make sure the coast is clear" She looked round, then realised Harry wasn't there. She turned, and saw him walking over to a set of shelves "Rick?"

"I can hear a voice" He turned back "Can't you hear it?"

"No" Sally said, and Hermione shook her head.

"Oh" He looked back to the shelf, then picked up one of the orbs "It's got four names on it" He peered at it, then turned back to Sally in surprise "Someone's - I don't know who's and Dumbledore's, Voldemort's... and mine"

"Do you think it could be the prophecy Voldemort mentioned?" Sally asked, but before Harry could reply, Hermione interrupted.

"I've done as much as I can. We need to get him to a hospital, now, otherwise he will die" She glanced over at Harry "Bring it with you – we can look at it later" He nodded, and slipped it inside his robes. Then he pulled out his wand, and he and Sally levitated Arthur's body in to the air.

xoxox

"Headmaster – you should come to the infirmary at once"

"Poppy? What's wrong?"

"Arthur Weasley just appeared. He is seriously injured" Dumbledore stared in surprise at the fire, then he turned, and headed out of his office.

xoxox

"Poppy? How is he?"

"He should be fine" The matron stared down at the bed "Someone had already given him so potions, and cast a few healing spells, before he arrived. I would say that whoever it was saved his life"

"But you don't know who it was?" He asked, then, when she didn't reply, he turned to her "Poppy – do you know who it was?"

"This was attached to him" She handed him a piece of parchment. He took it, and read it.

"Madam Pomfrey – please help him. He was bitten by a snake – possibly a magical one. We did our best, but he needs more help than we can give. We don't know why he was in The Hall of Prophecies, nor do we care. We only care that he is looked after. Respectfully Yours, The Order Of V" He continued to stare at it, then turned back to Pomfrey.

"I would ask that you tell no one about this, until I get a chance to investigate it"

"Of course" She nodded. He turned to leave, but, when he reached the door, she called out "I know that you, and The Minister, don't like this Order Of V, but they saved his life tonight. I just think you should remember that"

"Thank you, Poppy"

xoxox

"I will contact Molly tomorrow" Remus said "See what is going on, and if he is alright"

"Thank you" Sally smiled "We would have gone with him, but..."

"But you didn't want Dumbledore to catch you" He smiled back "Don't worry – we will make sure no one knows it was you, at least not until you are ready"

"Thank you" Hermione said, then she turned to Harry "So – are you going to tell them?"

"Tell them what?" He asked.

"The Prophecy" She smiled "You forgot?" He blushed, then reached in to his robes, and pulled out the orb.

"I found this in the room Mr Weasley was guarding" He held it up "I think it is the prophecy that Voldemort told us about four years ago. The one that says I am the only one who can kill him" He turned it so they could see the writing inscribed on the orb "Luna – did your mother tell you about the... prophecy orbs?"

"A little, yes" She walked over, then gasped as she read what was on it "He lied?"

"Who lied?" Remus asked.

"Every prophecy that is made has the name of the seer, and the name of the first person who heard it. This prophecy was made by someone with the initials SPT, and heard by someone with the initials APWBD" She paused, giving them a chance to understand what she

had said "So unless there is someone else with the same set of dumb-ass initials, Dumbledore has known the prophecy since it was first made. He has known all this time" She turned, and then walked over to her father, flinging herself into his arms.

For a moment, everyone was silent, then Susan turned to Harry.

"So, what does it say?" He looked at her, then back at the orb.

"How do I..."

"Just ask it" Eric said, glancing down at his daughter "It will tell you" Harry nodded.

"Show me" He said. For a moment, nothing happened, then a ghostly white figure emerged from the top of the orb.

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches, born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies"

"Well" Sally said after a moment "That sucks"

Chapter 11 – Summer's Dance

Harry took his partner's hand, and led her to the dance floor. He knew that everyone was watching, especially a certain red-head, but right now he didn't care. He had been looking forward to this night for the past six weeks, and now that he had her, here, in his arms, he wasn't going to let anyone spoil it.

xoxox

(six weeks earlier)

"Harry?" Hermione turned when she realised Harry hadn't stood up after class had ended.

"Give me a min, Min" He replied "I just need to talk to Professor McGonagall"

"Okay" She nodded. As she walked away, he stood up, and walked over to the Professor's desk.

"Professor McGonagall, I was wondering if I could ask you something"

"By all means, Mr Potter" She looked up "How can I help you today?"

"I understand that the Valentine's Day dance is going ahead" She nodded "I was wondering if I might be able to invite Sally, as my date"

"I am afraid not" She shook her head "The Dance is open to students and staff only. Since Miss Perks has been withdrawn from the school, she is no longer a student" Harry stared for a moment, then shrugged.

"Okay" He said "I guess I can use the night to catch up on my reading"

"You won't consider going with someone else?" She asked "With the Christmas you have had, I think having one night of fun might be what you need" He paused, then shrugged.

"I will think about it" He replied "Thank you"

xoxox

Ginny stared across the floor, glaring with fury at the girl dancing with Harry. The rumours about who Harry was taking to the dance had been spreading for the past few weeks, but she hadn't believed them.

xoxox

(four weeks earlier)

"Okay Harry - I am sick of you moping" Myrtle flew from the end of her bathroom and came to a stop in front of him "Are you going to tell me what is wrong, or am I going to have to get it out of you by force?" Harry glanced up at her with a slight smile.

"How would you do that, exactly?"

"Do you really want to find out?" She asked with an evil grin. He stared at her for a moment, then laughed.

"Okay. I give in" He leaned back against the wall "There is a Valentine's Dance in a month, and I have been banned from inviting Sally"

"But McGonagall and Dumbledore are still suggesting you attend the dance" The ghost replied "Have they suggested anyone you could go with?"

"No one in particular" He said "But apparently the news that I might be single is spreading through the school, and a number of girls have decided to make their interest known" He frowned as she giggled "It's not that amusing, Myrtle"

"Sorry" She smirked "But, if you think about it, the answer is obvious"

"It is?"

"Yes, it is" She smiled "You will figure it out soon enough"

xoxox

"They seem to be having fun" Dumbledore sat down next to Luna at the table that Harry had commandeered for them.

"Isn't that what you wanted, sir?" Luna asked "For Harry to have fun?"

"Of course" Dumbledore smiled "But I thought that Miss Granger was dating Mr Krum"

"She is" Luna replied with a smile "And they are very happy"

"But..." Dumbledore gestured to the floor, where Harry and Hermione were dancing.

"But what?" Luna looked at him.

"Back in my day, Miss Lovegood, friends didn't dance like that" He looked at her steadily "They seem to be closer than they were a few months ago"

"They were both badly affected by Sirius' death, sir. We all were" They looked at the couple dancing "It brought us all a lot closer"

"But I shouldn't read anything in to this?" He turned back to her "I shouldn't see it as a sign that Harry is actually paying attention to my advice?"

"No, sir, you really shouldn't" She said with a smile "Now, if you will excuse me" She stood up, and walked over to the buffet, leaving a confused looking Dumbledore behind.

xoxox

(two weeks earlier)

"Well – now you say it, it is obvious!"

xoxox

"Would you like to sit down, my dear?" Harry asked Hermione "Or would you like to try one more dance?"

"I think we should sit down" She gestured over to where Luna was leaving Dumbledore "I think if the Headmaster continues to question Luna much longer, he will be tempted to use legilimency again"

"And we wouldn't want that, would we?" Harry smirked, but then he took her hand, and lead her off the floor to where Dumbledore was sat. Harry pulled a chair out for Hermione, then, as she sat down, he nodded to the Headmaster "Professor"

"Mr Potter, Miss Granger" He smiled "Are you enjoying your evening?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you" Hermione replied "Of course, if we were allowed to celebrate Valentine's Day with those we love, we might enjoy it more" She smiled as Harry sat down next to her "But I can see why you wouldn't want to let students have too much fun during a ball. You never know where it might lead"

"You know full well that that is not the reason non-students are permitted to attend school functions, Miss Granger" He frowned "Anyway – if you will excuse me, I will leave you to the rest of your evening"

"Good evening, sir" Hermione nodded as the Headmaster stood up and walked away. Luna walked passed him, and sat down at the table.

"The Headmaster had to leave?" She asked with a smile.

"Something I said upset him" Hermione said with a frown "But I can't imagine what" Harry gave a chuckle. She smiled at him "Okay – maybe I can imagine what, but what does he expect?"

"He was asking a few questions" Luna said, starting to eat "He wanted to know if the fact Harry is here with you means that he has started listening to the Headmaster's advice" She glanced around "And a few other people are starting to talk"

"So, let them talk" Harry said "It's not like I haven't been to a ball with two girls before, is it?"

xoxox

(one week earlier)

“After requests from a number of students, we have decided to hold another Hogsmeade visit on the morning of the Dance. Unlike the others, this will only be for fourth years and above, with the exception of those in the younger years who have been invited to the dance. In light of the events of the previous visit, all students will be taken too and from the village in carriages, and security will be a lot tighter. Anyone found breaking the rules and boundaries will not only be banned from attending the dance, but will be punished severely” Dumbledore stared round the hall “I hope this is clearly understood, as I would not want to stop anyone from having fun” There were various nods of assent “That is all the information I have for the moment. Thank you”

xoxox

“Miss Lovegood, would you like to dance?” Harry stood up, offering his hand to the young girl. She looked at him, then her gaze drifted passed him.

“I think that the dance might have to be postponed” She said “But, when we return, I would love to dance with you” He turned to follow her gaze, and saw Myrtle bobbing around on the far side of the hall.

“Well, that can't be good, can it?” He said, then turned to Hermione “I'm sorry sweetie, but I think we should go”

“Okay” She glanced up towards the Head table “But I think that we should try not to draw too much attention to ourselves”

“I'll stay” Luna said suddenly “Whatever Myrtle wants us for, I don't think it will involve me. You two go, and I will stick around, and deflect any questions”

“You sure?” Harry asked.

“Yes” She nodded “Although...”

“Although what?”

“You two going off before the dance ends will only increase the rumours and speculation about what you are doing” She smirked at the expression on their faces “But they are just rumours and speculation. Just because they are true doesn't mean anyone will believe them”

Harry stuck his tongue at her, then turned to Hermione “So, my dear, would you like to take a walk?”

“I believe I would” She smiled back at him, then turned to Luna “We will be back in a little while. Look after yourself”

“Yes mum” Luna smirked at her “You two take care as well”

“We will” She turned back to Harry “Lets go”

xoxox

“Myrtle?”

“You are needed in The Chamber. There is a problem”

“Okay”

xoxox

“Albus”

“Yes?”

“There's been an attack”

xoxox

Harry and Hermione walked in to The Chamber, but found it was empty.

“So – what's up?” He asked.

“Maybe she will be here in a moment” Hermione replied, then gave him a smile “So, I can do something I have been wanting to do all night” She turned, took his head in her hands, and kissed him, gently at first, then more and more passionately.

xoxox

(Earlier that day)

“Shouldn't they have arrived by now?” Sally looked round the pub “You don't think Dumbledore...”

“No, I don't think that Dumbledore prevented them” Susan replied “They probably just got delayed by the added security”

“Maybe we should go and look for them” Sally stood up, but sat down again a moment later.

“I know you are worried” Viktor smiled at her “After the last time we were here, I am worried too”

“But if we go out looking for them, then we might miss them” She sighed “Okay - I will wait”

“Glad to hear it” She turned, then jumped up and flung herself at Harry.

“What kept you?”

“The carriages were busier than we expected” Luna said, sitting down at the table “We had to take a later one”

“Okay” Sally stepped back and smiled “I forgive you. This time”

“Thank you, love” Harry kissed her “Now – shall we get a drink?”

xoxox

From across the room Ginny watched as Harry held a chair for his girlfriend, then sat down next to her. She knew he would be meeting her – even if she couldn't come to the dance, Harry wouldn't give up a chance to see his tart.

A few moments later, she saw Hermione and Sally stand up, then both head towards the back of the pub, to the toilets. She waited until they had vanished, then she stood up, and walked over to the table.

“Harry”

“Miss Weasley” Harry turned “Go away”

“I wanted to ask you...”

“Go. Away” Harry stood up “I promised Sally that I wouldn't hurt you, despite what you did. But Sally made no such promise, and she will be back soon”

“She doesn't scare me”

“Oh no?” She turned as Sally and Hermione walked up behind her. Sally was glaring at her with absolute hatred, while Hermione merely gazed at her with contempt “Are you sure about that?” Ginny stared back at her for a moment, then turned to Harry.

“Perhaps we can finish this conversation later” She said “When there aren't so many distractions” She gave him a small smile, then turned, and walked away. When she had left the pub, Sally turned back to the group.

“Well – that was fun”

xoxox

Half an hour later, Ginny watched as Harry and his friends left the pub. She knew that Harry, Hermione and Luna would be returning to the school, while the others would be making their way home. As she continued to watch, Harry gave Sally a quick kiss on the forehead, then, turning, he offered his arms to Hermione and Luna, then walked off down the road. For a moment, Sally watched him, then she turned, took Viktor's proffered arm, and, along with Susan and Remus, walked off in the other direction. Once the street was empty, she came out of her hiding place, and allowed herself a small smile.

“Perhaps Ron was right” She thought to herself “Perhaps the distance is pushing them apart” Still smiling to herself, she set off down the street, the same way Harry had gone.

xoxox

(The Chamber)

“So, I can do something I have been wanting to do all night” She turned, took his head in her hands, and kissed him, gently at first, then more and more passionately.

A few moments later, there was a cough behind them. They broke apart, then turned to face the new arrival.

“I hope you can explain this” Sally stared at them “Why, exactly are you kissing my friend, and not me?”

“Because” Harry replied “If I kissed you, there would be a Tri-Wizard Champion who would be very annoyed with me” He turned to Hermione “Wouldn't there, sweetheart?”

“Why yes, love, I believe there would” As she spoke, she transformed herself in to Sally, while her counterpart transformed in to Hermione “So, Min, what's up?”

xoxox

“Two hours ago, Diagon Alley was attacked” Susan said. Hermione had brought the other two back to Grimmauld Place, where Susan and Eric were waiting for them “It was mostly empty – there were a number of other Valentine's Balls going on – so there were no deaths, and only minor casualties, but there was quite a lot of damage done to various shops. The Leaky Cauldron was on fire at one point, and Fortescue's is almost gone” She sighed “The only place that was untouched was Gringotts, and I think that was because even Voldemort doesn't want to risk angering the goblins” She paused, and shrugged “At least, not yet”

“But the attack is over?” Sally asked “We aren't going there?”

“No” Eric shook his head “But we thought you might like to use this evening to send a message to Voldemort. To let him know that The Order does not take kindly to attacks on innocents, and that for every person he harms, whether seriously or not, we will respond with deadly force” He looked at them “We have found three more of the fourteen names, and the location of their Manors” He smiled apologetically “I know you were all planning a different type of evening, and neither I nor Susan will force you to do this”

“But if we are to send him a message, then striking back on the night of his attack is a good way to do it” Sally said, and both Susan and Eric nodded. She turned to the others “What do you think?”

“Well – we are here now” Harry said with a smile “And we did want tonight to be fun and special” He looked at Hermione who nodded. Sally smiled at both of them, then turned back to her mother.

“Janus – we are at your disposal”

xoxox

VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

by Rita Skeeter

Last night, the bodies of eight more wizards and witches were found in the ruins of three Manors and each Manor was found with the now familiar and sinister signal of the self-proclaimed Order of V above it.

Earlier that night, an unknown group attacked Diagon Alley, leaving several injured and a number of shops and premises in ruins. While the DMLE was dealing with this, the three Manors were attacked with ruthless efficiency, leaving three Heads of Family dead, along with their wives, and in two cases, their heirs.

Minister Diggory has again condemned these attacks as the acts of vigilantes pursuing a radical agenda. He made a brief statement earlier this morning.

“I can confirm that Anthony and Juliet Nott, Simon and Sarah Parkinson and their oldest son Julius, and Marcus and Susan

Greengrass and their eldest daughter Talia were all found dead last night, and that the Nott, Greengrass and Parkinson Manors were all burned to the ground. Each site was marked with the red V that The Order uses to sign their work”

When asked what The Ministry was doing, he had this to say :-

“We will catch these murderers, and when we do we will subject them to the full punishment the law will allow”

When questioned about the fact that so far every person who has been killed has carried The Dark Mark on their left arm, and that the vast majority were known Death Eaters that escaped punishment at the end of the last war, Diggory made no comment.

xoxox

“Potter” Harry looked up as Pansy Parkinson called out across The Great Hall. A few moments earlier, he had seen her reading The Prophet, and, as she came towards them, he could see a black-bordered envelope in her pocket. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Luna and Hermione both reach for their wands, but he gestured that they shouldn't draw them – at least no yet.

“Miss Parkinson” He stood up as Pansy arrived at the Gryffindor table “Will you have a seat?”

“Thank you” She smiled, then sat down “I know I am a bit late, but I wanted to give you my condolences on the loss of your godfather” She gave a small grin at the look of surprise on his face “Not what you were expecting, huh?”

“Not exactly, no” He shook his head “But thank you” He glanced at the paper on the table “You have my sympathies also”

“That is sweet of you, but don't waste them on someone who doesn't need them”

“Pansy?”

"I know what my parents were. And I knew they had dragged Julius in to their little 'social club' as well" She tried to control the anger in her voice, and mostly succeeded "Believe me when I say I will not mourn their deaths, Mr Potter..."

"Harry"

"Harry" She smiled "Anyway - I just wanted to tell you how sorry I was about Sirius' death. I might not get another chance, as I will be leaving school at the end of the week, and I doubt I will return"

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"My family is gone - I am the last of the Parkinsons. And while my family might not be on par with your's or Miss Granger-Black's, we do have some considerable wealth"

"And your parents' friends might not be happy that they no longer have access to that wealth" Harry said, and Pansy nodded.

"I have some relatives abroad" She continued "I have made arrangements to visit them, and stay until the war is over, one way or another" She stood up "I would suggest that you three do the same, but somehow, I don't think that is in your plan, is it?" She held up her hand before they could reply "I don't want to know"

"Good bye, Pansy" Harry said "And take care"

"You too" She replied "And if, when this war is done, you would like to come and visit, I will be happy to have you" She glanced at the others "All of you, including Miss Perks" They nodded, then watched as she turned, and went back to the Slytherin table.

xoxox

"Are there any more questions?" Dumbledore looked around the weekly staff meeting, but no one responded "Very well. There is one more item. The Founders' Day Ball is due to be held in two months, and, in consultation with Minister Diggory, I have decided it will proceed. However, in light of the attacks on Hogsmeade and Diagon

Alley, and the continued threat posed by The Order Of V, we will be taking various steps to increase security”

“You think The Order would attack?” McGonagall asked “So far they have only been targeting Death Eaters, and I would hope you are not going to invite any one who fits that description in to the school”

“And they saved Arthur's life over Christmas” Pomfrey added.

“We know very little about The Order, but what we do know has caused some concern. Every attack they have carried out has been done without bringing the wards down first. They also managed to get in and out of The Ministry without being detected, which is nigh-on impossible. And they have shown little or no regard for life” He sighed “And while their targets do appear to be limited to Death Eaters so far, who is to say that they won't expand their range to anyone they think is dark? Anyone who they believe might not have intentions that are pure?” He shook his head “I believe that we are better safe than sorry in this case, and so we will take the appropriate steps”

xoxox

“My Lord – they are going ahead with the Ball”

“Excellent” Voldemort smiled down at the Death Eater in front of him “I tire of this skulking in the shadows. I think it is time that we showed the people just where their future lies”

“Yes, my Lord”

“And so, eleven hundred years after my ancestor founded the school, I will return to rule it in his name”

Chapter 12 – Shatterpoints

“Really?” Harry asked.

“Yup. The last three members of the inner circle” She held up the parchments her mother had given her half an hour before “Apparently some of Viktor's friends from Durmstrang were approached by Mulciber and Snape two days ago. They all refused to join, but one of them – you remember Lyla from the tournament – managed to slip a tracking spell on to them, and tracked them back to a small building on the outskirts of London”

“Why did they refuse to join?” Luna asked “And why did Snape ask them?”

“It seems that we've been doing our job pretty well” Sally replied with a smile “Voldemort is running out of Death Eaters, and because he doesn't want to attract Ministry attention, he is recruiting from overseas” She smirked “And your father has been circulating the news of The Order's victories far and wide, so not many people want to get involved with Voldemort for fear of us”

“How many does he have left?” Hermione looked up from the book she was reading “Hundreds? Dozens?”

“About fifteen” Sally replied, then gave a laugh as the other three looked at her in surprise “Seriously. Aside from the five we know of, there seems to be only around ten more who have joined him. Which is partly bad news – the fact there are more than Snape, Malfoy and the other three – but it is also very good news, because it means he is unlikely to launch a massive attack any time soon”

“And fifteen is better than thirty” Harry added, then paused “These ten – they are not former Death Eaters who have returned?”

“Not as far as we can tell” Sally said “They are all new recruits to the cause”

“Cool” Harry smiled “So – what about the last three members of the inner circle? Are we going to go after them?”

"Yes, but not just yet" Sally started to pass the parchments out amongst the others "After the attacks on the other Manors, it seems that the safe-house has had its wards beefed up a bit. Remus is doing some tests to see if we would be detected, and so far it looks good. But he wants to be sure before we launch an attack"

"Okay" Hermione nodded looking at the paper "I will see what I can find as well" She looked up "Not that I think Remus can't do it, but it can never hurt to have another pair of eyes"

"People keep telling me I have my mother's eyes" Harry said "Does that count?" He realised everyone was staring at him with varying degrees of disbelief "I guess not"

"Well – Harry's views aside, they think the tests should be done in about a week or so" Sally continued "And if he's happy, we can storm the safe-house next Sunday"

"Why Sunday?"

"The house isn't out in the country this time. It's in a village about the size of Hogsmeade – a muggle village though, not a wizarding one – so they wanted to pick a night when a lot of people wouldn't be around"

"And that's Sunday?"

"The local football team are playing in a final of some sort. Most of the population will be going to that" Sally looked round "We think we have found where Voldemort's headquarters are, but Mum thinks we should take one thing at a time" The others nodded "Well - I think that's all I came here to tell you. Any questions?"

"How's Aunt Sue doing with the tickets?" Luna asked "Any joy?"

"So far, not so much" Sally shook her head "She asked at The Ministry about extra tickets to The Founders' Day Ball, but it seems that Minister Diggory doesn't want me to be invited" She glanced at Harry "You can probably imagine why. But if it makes you feel any better, I am pretty sure that Eric isn't going to be invited either"

"He isn't" Luna said "But he doesn't care all that much. He thinks that everyone who will be invited will be in Dumbledore or Diggory's pocket, if not both, and so there will be very little worth reporting"

"He's probably right" Harry sighed, then grinned "Unless we decide to honour Sirius' memory with some hijinks and mayhem"

xoxox

"Okay – that's it for today" Ginny looked around the Room of Requirement "We'll pick it up again same time next week"

xoxox

"So – you'll be home tonight?" Sally asked Hermione "Viktor has something he wants to talk to you about"

"I will do my best" She replied with a smile.

"Okay. I'll let him know" Sally turned to her boyfriend "You take care now, and I will see you tomorrow"

"Yes dear" He leaned over and kissed her, then watched as she vanished.

xoxox

"I'll catch you up in a moment Ron - I just want to check something out"

"Okay" Ginny watched her brother walk down the corridor, then she turned, and sprinted the other way.

A few minutes later, she stopped outside Myrtle's bathroom, and peered inside. When she saw no one there, she backed out, closed the door and then slid herself in to an alcove on the other side of the corridor.

xoxox

"So – are you going to go to the dance?" Luna asked, looking at her friends.

"I don't know" Harry shrugged "I mean – the last one was kind of fun, at least it was before the Death Eater attack. But I am not sure I could stand the rumours and gossip if we were to do it again. Not to mention the death glares from TWS" He held the door to Myrtle's bathroom open while the two girls walked through it "What about you Min?"

"Same thing really. I mean - I obviously had more fun than you did, but the glares and looks I got for the first few days after were not nice. I honestly thought that the little witch was going to attack me"

"So – on the whole, I think I would rather skip it than spend another night dealing with Miss Weasley's crazy looks" He stopped "Did you hear that?"

"What?" Luna asked, then they all turned as they heard footsteps behind them "Oh dear"

"Oh dear?" Ginny sneered at them "Is that the best you can come up with, Loony?" She turned her gaze on Harry and Hermione "Where did you two come from? You weren't in the bathroom a few minutes ago - I checked"

"Maybe you didn't check hard enough" Hermione replied "Maybe you need glasses?"

"You were in The Chamber, weren't you?" Ginny asked. They all stared at her.

"Why would we be in The Chamber?" Luna asked "I mean, apart from avoiding you as much as we can"

"I don't know" Ginny smirked "But I am sure Dumbledore would like to know about this" She looked at Harry "Unless you can think of a reason for me not to tell him?"

"I can think of many reasons" Harry said calmly "But go ahead – tell him. The worst he can do is expel me, and I am already past caring whether I stay here or not" He stared at her until she looked away.

"Don't say I didn't warn you" She turned on her heel, and stormed off down the corridor.

"Do you think she will tell?" Hermione asked.

"Almost certainly" Harry replied "But I don't think he will do anything too severe" He smiled to himself.

"What are you planning?" Luna asked.

"A few years ago, I was lamenting the fact that I might be forced to blackmail our dear Headmaster to get him to stop bothering me" He rubbed his hands together "Now I am looking forward to it"

xoxox

Four hours later, the three of them were lined up in front of the Headmaster's desk.

"I understand that you three have been visiting The Chamber of Secrets"

"Yes sir" Harry replied.

"May I ask why?"

"It is a quiet place, away from the rest of the students" Hermione said "And we are fairly sure we won't be bothered by people we don't want to see"

"And may I ask why you need a quiet place away from the students?"

"Defence practice, sir" Luna replied. The other two nodded.

"You are using spells outside of classrooms? Unsupervised?" Dumbledore glared at them "You are aware that is against the rules?"

"Miss Weasley doesn't seem to have a problem with breaking those rules, sir. Are you going to ask her what she is doing, or is it just us?"

"Miss Weasley and her group are a recognised study group, Miss Granger..."

“Miss Granger-Black, sir”

“...and as such I have no problem with what they are doing. However you are completely unsupervised and in an area of the school that is impossible to reach if anything goes wrong” He stood up “How long has this been going on?” Hermione glanced at Harry, who made a gesture with his hand. She nodded, and turned back to Dumbledore.

“Since our third year, sir” She replied “Although we only asked Luna to join us earlier this year, when it became apparent that this year's DaDa teacher was even more of a plank than that prat Lockheart”

“Professor Umbridge comes to us on the highest...”

“She isn't teaching us any practical work, sir” Hermione was close to yelling, but calmed down when Luna squeezed her hand “We have OWL exams in four months, sir, and she has yet to let us pick up a wand. The three of us – Harry, Sally and I – were already studying in our spare time, but when Luna said that she would like some help, we invited her to join our group” She paused “That was before Sally was cursed and left the school, obviously”

“If you knew about Miss Weasley's group, why not join her?” Dumbledore asked “Surely you can see that studying in a large group is better than just the three of you”

“We have our reasons sir” Harry replied “Not least of which is that she seems to be incapable of minding her own business, and seems to be hell bent on interfering in my life even more than you do, sir” He resisted the urge to smirk as Dumbledore frowned at him.

“Would you care to explain that, Mr Potter?”

“Mr Potter-Black, sir” Harry replied “And I would have thought it needed no explanations”

“Indulge me then”

“You tried to kidnap me when I was eighteen months old. You tried to violate my parents will by taking me away from a man who had been convicted of no crime and broken no laws. I grew up in a happy,

contented home with a godfather who loved me, and yet the moment we met, you tried to take me away and make me live with strangers” He glanced at Hermione, who nodded in encouragement “When I started school, I had two friends, but that wasn't to your liking, so you did everything you could to make sure I made new friends, including the older brother of the illustrious Miss Weasley”

“And all the while you were continually trying to get him away from Sirius, and under the control of one of your many puppets, sir” Hermione continued “You were even going to take him away from those who loved and cared for him less than twenty four HOURS after he lost the only parent he had ever known”

“You claim you only want him to be happy, and yet you thwart that at every turn” Luna reached over and took Harry's hand “You are the Headmaster of Hogwarts – it is not beyond your power to allow Sally to attend a school dance, but since that doesn't go along with YOUR idea for HIS life, you say no” She paused, then made a small gesture to Harry. He nodded “And you lied to him repeatedly”

“What did I lie to him about?” Dumbledore asked, still reeling from the verbal attack.

“Either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives” Hermione said “You know the complete prophecy, sir. You have always known it. And yet you tried to wipe it from his mind in our first year, and lied about it afterwards. You told Minister Fudge, and all of us, that you didn't know the complete text of the prophecy, and yet you were the person to whom it was originally made” Dumbledore stared at her in disbelief.

“And you couldn't find the person responsible for cursing my girlfriend at the end of last year, sir” Harry added “The school isn't that big, but somehow the perpetrator escapes any kind of punishment” He paused, then lowered his voice “And yet you still think we should join her defence club” Dumbledore's eyes widened even further “So – if we are to be punished, then punish us. But, with all due respect, sir, we are done listening to you”

“If you are not going to expel us, then I suggest a truce. We will keep our own council – we will not tell anyone else what Weasley did to

Sally, nor will we publish our version of Harry's life in the press" Luna said "And, in school related matters, we will still respect your authority as much as we ever did"

"But you will stop trying to run our lives" Harry said "We are capable of looking after ourselves, and when we aren't, we all have parents who love and care for us who can give us all the advice we need"

"And you should also remember that you are talking to the Heirs to Houses Potter and Black" Hermione said "Granted, we can't do much at the moment, but between us we will have a lot of power in the future"

"So you are going to blackmail me?" Dumbledore asked, finding his voice.

"If that is what it takes for you to let us live our lives, yes" Luna said "But we are not asking for money, nor land nor anything else. We just want to be treated like any other student, and allowed to live our lives free from your meddling" She stared at him "I think you will find that is not too much to ask for, is it, sir?" There was a long period of silence, then he stood up.

"Very well. As it appears I have very little choice in the matter, I will accede to your demands" He looked at each of them in turn "You want to be treated like any other students? Fine. You are banned from all future Hogsmeade visits this year, and you will each serve a weeks detention with your Head of House. Miss Lovegood – you are no longer permitted to eat at the Gryffindor table, and you are not permitted in the Gryffindor common room any more. Any further transgressions of these rules, and I will see you all expelled. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly, sir" Harry replied "Is that all?"

"Yes. Now get the hell out of my office" He snapped, then he sat back in his chair as they left the office.

xoxox

MINISTRY MAKES OUTLANDISH CLAIMS

By Selene Heartnice

Ministry claims Order of V are Death Eaters :-

Last night The Minister released evidence purporting to show a connection between the recent attacks on Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade and the group known as The Order Of V. Minister Diggory suggested that The Order was made up of a group of extremist Death Eaters.

“They are intent on completing the work of their master, even though he is dead”

When asked about the executions of other Death Eaters, Minister Diggory suggested that these extremist Death Eaters were punishing the less dedicated members of Voldemort's army.

“So far, the people who have been murdered all escaped punishment when You-Know-Who fell. Records show that the then Minister Bagnold was not as thorough in her pursuit of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named's followers when the war ended, and while some of his more ardent supporters were punished, others escaped through various means”

He said he would publish more evidence later on this year, when it has been properly investigated.

Doubt Cast Over Ministry Claims :-

Almost as soon as Minister Diggory finished speaking, questions were raised over the veracity of his claims. Questions about the difference in tactics between the two groups. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a senior Ministry official said the following.

“The Order is not attacking the non-Marked members of the family. If this is a way of punishing Death Eaters, why are their families being left alone?”

Another source, also speaking anonymously, pointed out that Bellatrix Lestrange, also known as the Mad-Dog-Killer Lestrange,

could not be considered a “moderate” Death Eater by anyone, and yet she and her husband were executed by The Order.

The Real Truth?

We at The Quibbler believe that there is no connection between The Order of V and the recent attacks by Death Eaters against Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade. The two styles of attack are different – the Death Eaters are random and indiscriminate, while The Order's attacks are targeted and well planned. The Death Eaters don't mind who they kill or maim, while The Order has gone out of its way to ensure anyone who isn't marked gets saved. And the list of Death Eaters killed is almost identical to the list of Death Eaters who were present at Voldemort's rebirth last year.

We believe that the truth is much simpler than The Minister has stated – he is embarrassed and annoyed that The Order is fighting Voldemort, and fighting him well, while The Minister will not even acknowledge The Dark Lord's return.

xoxox

Sally and Viktor sat side by side on the couch, while Remus paced back and forth in front of them.

“Remus?” He continued to pace, making no response. Sally glanced at Viktor, who shrugged “REMUS!” She yelled. He stopped pacing, and turned to stare at her.

“What?”

“Something is on your mind, Professor” She asked.

“Yes. Sorry” He turned, and sat down “I finished the testing today”

“Really?” She sat up straighter “What did you find out?” He didn't answer for a moment, then he sighed and shook his head “That bad, huh?”

“No” He looked up “According to what I've found, there is nothing that would detect astral projection. No extra wards, no magic traps – nothing that would stop you from attacking the safe-house and razing it to the ground”

“And that's... bad?” Viktor asked, glancing at Sally in surprise.

“No” He shook his head “It's good”

“But...”

“These three are the last names on the list of twelve” He said “Once you have dealt with them – once they are dead – then there will be nothing standing between you and Voldemort”

“And you are worried that we will run headlong in to the final battle?” Sally asked. When Remus nodded, Sally smiled, then swapped couches so she was sat next to him “We know that we are not ready, and we will not attack the safe-house on Sunday and Voldemort on Monday” Remus studied her for a moment, then nodded.

“Okay” He smiled “Like I said – there is no reason that you can't go ahead with the attack”

“Excellent” She gave him a hug “I will go to The Chamber, and ask Myrtle to tell the others” She jumped to her feet “Thank you Remus”

“It's a pleasure” He replied “Well – sending you off to fight, kill and possibly die isn't a pleasure, but you get the idea”

xoxox

“Myrtle?” Sally looked around The Chamber “Are you here?” When there was no response, she walked down to the far end, called out again, then walked back to where she had appeared “MYRTLE?” She looked around, then sighed “Well – this isn't good” She leaned against the wall “Should I just transfer myself in to the common room? What if someone sees me? I could go to the dorm... but what if I catch Harry in the shower” She paused “Okay – that might be kind of fun” She blushed “Stop that! This is serious!” She started pacing back and forth.

“Okay - I can transfer myself in to the common room. But I can't be seen. Someone is bound to notice if I come back, and then TWS will find out and Dumbledore will find out and chaos and mayhem the likes of which even God has never seen will ensue” She stopped pacing “Or I can appear as someone else” She started pacing again, then a smile spread across her face.

“Someone who would never be questioned for appearing in a common room” She glanced up at the ceiling “Please, forgive me for this” She closed her eyes, transformed, then opened her eyes, and conjured a mirror “Well – if this doesn't work, at least I have a costume ready for next Halloween”

xoxox

“Mr Potter - I would speak with you” Harry turned, then nearly fell out of his seat.

“Lady Hufflepuff?” He jumped to his feet “To what do I owe this pleasure?”

“My associates and I wish to speak with you” She glanced around the common room “But in the private place”

“Very well” He stood up “Should I bring my friends?”

“Bring Miss Black - I will go and visit Miss Lovegood” The ghost bowed “I will see you, shortly”

“Don't call me shortly” He smirked, then nodded as she vanished.

xoxox

“Hello Luna” Harry and Hermione walked in to Myrtle's bathroom “I see you met Lady Hufflepuff as well?”

“Yes. She popped up while I was having a nap, and scared the crap out of me” She smiled “But she said it was important”

“And it is” The ghost of Helga Hufflepuff floated up behind them “Your friend, Mr Moore, has completed his work, and says that you can go ahead on with your plans” The three of them stared at her in surprise.

“And you know this how?” Hermione asked “If you don't mind me asking that is”

“Ah. I thought you might ask me that” The ghost smirked. A moment later, the image transformed in to the floating form of...

“SALLY?” Harry stared at her “Why are you a ghost?”

“I am in The Chamber, and this was the only way I could find you”

“Oh” Harry continued to stare in shock at the figure “So – we attack?”

“Yes” The ghost-Sally replied with a smile “We attack”

Chapter 13 – Seven Days

Remus bounded in to the kitchen and dropped some parchments on the counter top in front of Susan.

“Remus? What's this?”

“The solution” He said with a big smile, then added “I think”

“Really?” She looked down, and read through it “This is good. This is very good” She looked up at him “Where did you find it?” He blushed “Remus? Where did you find it?” She watched as he pulled a brightly coloured book out of his robes.

“It came from here” He handed it over. She looked at it, then back up at him.

“You're kidding?”

“Sadly, no” He shook his head. She sighed, then picked up the book.

“Why do I get the feeling that, wherever Sirius is right now, he is laughing at us”

xoxox

“So – what did you decide about the dance?” Luna asked, sitting down next to Harry. The evening meal had finished five minutes before, and she had joined him to do her homework.

“I don't know” He sighed “Part of me thinks we can do the same thing again, but the other part of me thinks that – now Dumbledore is not trying to be my friend – he will pay far more attention to what I do, and might realise that the girl I am dancing with is not exactly who she appears to be”

“And then he will expel you, and probably Hermione”

“If it was just me, I wouldn't mind. But if Minnie wants a future in this world, getting kicked out of school isn't the best way to start it”

"True" Luna nodded, then looked up in surprise as an owl flew over their table and dropped a package in front of Harry "Expecting anything?"

"Not that I know of" He stared at the parcel for a moment, then pulled out his wand. Luna did the same.

"Just in case"

"Oh – okay" He cast a few diagnostic spells "Well – it seems fine" He levitated it, and turned it round "It's Aunt Sue's writing" He lowered it to the table, then opened it "It's a book" He pulled it out, and put it on the table between them.

"Why would Aunt Sue send you a book? Especially one written by Gilderoy Lockheart?"

"Hold on – there's a note as well" He pulled out the small parchment, then started reading.

"Dear All, I know it seems strange, but I think this book might hold the solution you've been looking for. Check the chapter on possession and dark spirits. And when you still don't understand, ask Hermione, and she will explain it to you (grin), Love as always, Aunt Sue" He handed the parchment to Luna, then picked up the book. He spent a few minutes flicking through it, then he closed it and put it down again.

"No good?"

"I can't tell" He shrugged "I think Aunt Sue was right – we do need Minnie"

"For what?" Hermione asked from behind them, then she caught sight of the book on the table "What's that doing there?"

"It was a present from Aunt Sue" Luna said "She thinks it will be helpful" She passed the note over to Hermione, who read it, then glanced at the book, then back to her friends.

"You don't think she's gone crazy, do you?"

"It's always possible" Harry admitted "But can you read the chapter she mentions tonight, and see what you think?"

"I suppose so" She sighed "But really – a Lockheart book providing useful information?"

"There's a first time for everything" Luna replied "I mean – who would have thought we could go through a whole day without being bothered by TWS" She smiled as the other two nodded "But now – I have another, much more important question" She looked down at the table, and pulled out a parchment from her home work "Why do I have to learn about what Xylthplythlyx The First did during the seventy seventh goblin rebellion? How is that ever going to help me in real life?"

xoxox

Hermione leaned back in her bed, and opened the book.

"Okay – possession... possession... here it is" She propped the book up against her legs, and began to read.

"For several years, there had been reports of a dark presence stalking the valleys of Algargara. Children being taken in the night, people going out in the day and never being seen again. Many great and noble wizards had attempted to thwart this dark, evil force, but of all those who had gone to the Vale of Mothran, none had ever returned. It was under these dismal and dangerous circumstances that I, Gilderoy Lockheart, volunteered to step forward and save the villagers from their grisly and horrific fate" She closed her eyes and shook her head "This had better be worth it" She thought "Or I will make Harry pay for subjecting me to this..." She frowned "Oh god – I can't even think up a suitable word to describe how bad this is" She took a deep breath, then continued to read.

xoxox

Half an hour later, with trembling hands, she closed the book, then carefully put it down on the bedside table. For a moment, she simply stared at it, then she let a smile come across her lips.

XOXOX

“Good evening, one and all, and welcome to The Founders' Day Ball!” Dumbledore's voice rang out across The Great Hall, which had been transformed for the evening. The long, House tables had gone, replaced by smaller tables that sat eight or ten people. The banners of the Founders were draped around the walls, along with banners bearing the emblems of The Ministry, Hogwarts and the Houses.

“Tonight marks the 1100th year since the founding of Hogwarts – 1100 years since the four greatest witches and wizards of the age got together and formalised the teaching of magic throughout the country. It was a bold and brave decision then, but I think we can all agree that it has worked out very well” He paused for the applause that filled the hall, then continued.

“Hogwarts has a glorious history of educating the best amongst us. Ministers, Wizengamot Members and Members of the ICW. Authors, painters, spell-crafters and wand-makers. And tonight, we have some of our successful students back with us” He gestured to the tables to his left, where a number of adult wizards were sat.

“So – if you would all join me in a toast” He raised his goblet “To...” He stopped as there was a scream from the back of the hall. For a moment he couldn't locate the cause, but then, when he realised everyone was staring up – at the ceiling that, until a few moments before, had been displaying the same starry night that was above the castle itself. At first he wasn't sure what he was seeing, but a moment later, the shape resolved itself in to a large skull, white as bone, with a snake writhing around it. Once The Dark Mark became clear, the screams in the hall doubled, then tripled.

“Ladies and Gentlemen – do not panic!” He yelled out “I am sure there is a perfectly reason explanation for this...” Before he could finish, the doors to the hall exploded in a blinding flash. As the light faded, and the dust settled, twelve figures strode in, all with wands raised.

“Headmaster Dumbledore – I believe you were talking about a party for the best and brightest that Hogwarts has produced. How lucky you are that I am here” Voldemort smiled.

“What do you want, Tom?” Dumbledore replied in a steady voice.

“What else? To celebrate my ancestor's achievement” Voldemort looked around the hall “I am the last descendant of Salazar Slytherin, the greatest of The Founders. I am here to take this school as mine, as is my birthright” He turned back to Dumbledore “Of course – if you will not give it to me peacefully, I can make it mine by right of conquest”

“You know I can't allow you to do that, Tom” Dumbledore replied calmly “Hogwarts is place of peace, of learning. Not of death and destruction” He stared fixedly at The Dark Lord “You shouldn't have come here tonight”

“When have you ever known me to miss a party, my dear Headmaster?” Voldemort replied with a smile “And, as you seem unwilling to consider my very reasonable demand, I am afraid that I will have to start the festivities early” As he finished speaking, he pulled out his wand “AVADA KEDAVRA!”

xoxox

Harry stared in horror as Dumbledore fell to the floor. Moments later, McGonagall, Flitwick, Hagrid, Pomfrey, Amelia Bones and Arthur Weasley fell beside the Headmaster as the Death Eaters opened fire on the other guests. The hall was filled with screams and cries of terror as the carnage continued.

He risked a glance over the table he was hiding behind, and saw that some of the guests were fighting back. Slughorn and Sprout were sheltering behind the staff table, throwing out a few curses. But as he watched, Trelawney cast a blasting curse that shattered the table, killing Sprout on the spot and seriously wounding the potions master. A moment later a killing curse finished him off.

Ginny, Ron and some of their defence group were leading a fight back in one corner, but it was clear it wouldn't last for long. As Harry watched, Ron was blown against the far wall, and fell in a boneless heap.

"What the hell happened?" Harry turned, and smiled in surprise as Sally, Susan, Remus, Viktor and Eric appeared behind him. Then there was a scream of pain, and he turned in time to see Ginny being hurled through the gap where the doors used to be.

"Voldemort stormed in, demanded Dumbledore's surrender" Hermione said "When Dumbledore refused, the Death Eaters opened fire" She glanced at Harry "I thought we could use some help"

"Good thinking" He gave her a grim smile "But how did they get here? Didn't you tell me that you can't apparate in Hogwarts?"

"Apparently The Founders decided mass murder was enough of a reason to suspend that rule" Remus said, then he looked around "So what's the plan?"

"Fight. Kill" Harry said "Don't die"

"Remus – go left. Mum – go right. Eric, Vik – see if you can get to the staff table" Sally said "Take no prisoners" They nodded, and Harry watched as the four departed, then turned back to his girlfriend.

"What about us?"

"We three are going to form a human shield, and you are going to follow us"

"What?" He stared at her in disbelief.

"At the hand of the other, my love" She stared at him with resolve "Anyone can kill Death Eaters, but it is your hand that must strike the killing blow" She looked at the other two girls "Ready?" They both nodded back "Then lets go"

"No..." Harry watched as they cast a shield, then stood up. Knowing it would be futile to argue, he stood up behind them, and they all headed towards Voldemort.

xoxox

“Minster – are you going to give me your surrender?” Voldemort glared down at the cowering form of Diggory “You are pathetic. Your son died a much better death”

“Don't you...” The Minister's final words were cut off as a killing curse ended his life. Voldemort stared down at his corpse, but a moment later he felt a blasting curse smash against his shield. He turned, then smiled.

“Miss Perks. Miss Lovegood. And of course, Miss Black” He gave a mocking bow “I am so glad you could join us this evening” He frowned “But where is Mr Potter? I didn't think he ever let you three off the leash”

“REDUCTO!” The three girls called out, but he waved the spells aside.

“You will have to do better than that” He smiled at them “But, sadly, you won't get the chance”

xoxox

“REDUCTO!” The blasting curse smashed in to the ground, sending up multiple chips from the stone floor. The girls instinctively threw up their arms, and in the time it took for them to recover, Voldemort loosed three killing curses, each one striking its target in the head.

“NO!” Harry yelled out, his eyes fixed on Sally's dead form.

“Oh Mr Potter – you are here!” Voldemort exclaimed “I am so glad you could witness the...”

“AVADA KEDEVRA!” Harry poured his heart in to the curse, and a second later Voldemort was blasted off his feet by the impact of the spell. He crashed in to the opposite wall, and fell to the floor, dead. Harry didn't give the corpse a second glance, instead turning back and kneeling by the body of his girlfriend.

xoxox

Snape shook his head in disbelief as his master died, then turned his gaze on to The Boy Who Lived. With Voldemort dead, Snape knew his days were numbered.

“But” He thought “I am not going to die alone” He raised his wand “AVADA KEDEVRA!”

xoxox

“Harry?” Sally opened her eyes.

“You're alive?” Harry pulled her in to a hug, and squeezed her tightly.

“Yes, my love, I am alive” She leaned in to him, not wanting to let him go “It was only a dream”

“It felt... I thought I'd lost you” He said in to her shoulder “You, Min – everyone”

“Would you like to go and see?” She asked. There was a moment, then he nodded “Okay” She gently pushed him back “Lets go”

xoxox

Susan woke to a gentle knocking on the door.

“Yes?” She called out, voice raspy with left-over sleep.

“Mum? It's me. Can we come in?”

“Yes” Susan sat up as the door opened “Harry? What's wrong?”

“Nightmare” Harry said, glancing at Sally.

“Bad?”

“The worst” Sally replied “Harry appeared in my room, convinced I was dead” She shivered “That Voldemort killed me – killed us all” Before Sally had finished speaking, Susan had flung the covers aside and rushed over to them. She enfolded them both in her arms.

"I am still here" She whispered. For a moment, they stood, then Susan continued "Where's Minnie?"

"She's here" Viktor said from the door, leading the young girl in. Hermione had obviously been crying, and almost at once, Harry turned and took her in his arms.

"I was so scared" She said softly "You weren't in your dorm – you weren't anywhere. I watched you die... so many deaths..."

"I know" He leaned down and gently kissed her "But it's just a dream. We can stop it" He turned to Sally, who was still in her mother's arms "Can't we?"

"Yes" She replied "We can"

xoxox

Half an hour later, the entire Order was assembled in Grimmauld Place. Hermione had returned to fetch Luna and Myrtle, and, after asking Rowena for help, had been able to bring Luna back using a portkey that would be ignored by the wards.

"I know what you saw" The ghost had said "For we saw it too. If you are back before breakfast, no one will know you are missing"

Luna had sat down next to her father, while Myrtle hovered next to Remus.

"Thank you all for coming" Sally said from the front of the room "I know it is late" She glanced at her watch "Or early, but this couldn't wait" She took a deep breath "Voldemort is going to attack The Founders' Day Ball in seven days time" She glanced at Harry, but he shook his head and indicated she should continue "We have told you about our dreams before, and this morning we had another... premonition, for want of a better phrase. Voldemort confronted Dumbledore, and then he killed him. Then he killed McGonagall, Flitwick, Mr Weasley, Madam Bones, Minister Diggory and Hagrid. His Death Eaters murdered most of the students, including Ron, Ginny and their defence club" She saw tears running down Luna's face "Min summoned the Order, and we helped Harry kill Voldemort"

She noticed Harry glare at her “But it cost Luna, Min and me our lives. Harry killed him, but then Snape cursed him in the back”

“Now – we know our dreams are not exactly set in stone” Hermione said, coming forward “But we know that Voldemort will be there. And even if we kill him, it will still mean the death of hundreds of students, along with most of the staff and the guests”

“Dumbledore might call those acceptable losses” Sally continued “But I don't” She paused “If we let Voldemort come to The Ball, then it will be a blood bath. So I see only one solution to this”

“We attack him before The Ball” Harry said, standing up and walking next to his girlfriend “The night before The Ball, we go to Riddle Manor, we find him, and we kill him. And any other Death Eater that is there” He could see the looks of agitation in the people they were facing “I know what you are thinking – we are not ready, we are not good enough to face him, we should wait until a time of our choosing. I know, because I am thinking it too. But we don't have a choice. If it was just us, I would agree. Even if it was just us, Dumbledore and The Ministry, I would agree. But it's not – there are hundreds of children at Hogwarts – children who have done nothing wrong... children who can't possibly defend themselves” He paused “We can't let them die, not if we can stop it” He turned back to Sally, who smiled at him, then turned to face the group.

“Are there any objections?” She looked around, but, aside from one or two worried faces, no one said anything “Good. We will meet again tonight to plan out the next week, and the attack. Until then, start thinking. Any ideas are welcome, no matter how ludicrous they might seem” She saw Hermione yawn “Although I think the main idea now is to get some sleep”

xoxox

“Are you going to be alright?” Sally sat opposite Harry, holding his hands in hers.

“Yes” He smiled weakly “I'm sorry I surprised you. I just...” He shook his head “I just had to see you. Make sure you weren't... that you weren't”

"I know" She kissed him softly "You should get back before you are missed" He smiled at her, then nodded.

"I will be back tonight, and I should have some news by then" She looked at him curiously "Consider it a surprise"

"Okay" She watched as he vanished, then she turned and saw her mother stood behind her "Hey"

"Are you sure this is wise?"

"No"

"But you are going to do it anyway?"

"What other choice do we have?"

"Leave" Susan sat down opposite her "Leave – take Harry, leave the country and never come back"

"We can't" Sally sighed. Susan closed her eyes, then nodded.

"I know" She opened her eyes and gazed at her daughter "I just don't want to see you hurt"

"Neither do I" Sally replied with a smirk, then she suddenly remembered something "Minnie says that book is probably right"

"Really?"

"Yeah. She is going to see if she can adapt Lockheart's spell – to make it specific to the task at hand – but mostly she thinks it will work just fine"

"Wow" Susan shook her head "I think I owe him an apology" She frowned "Okay – now I have to leave and never come back!"

xoxox

"Meet me at lunch" Harry told Hermione before she set off for class "I want to take a trip, and I will need you to come with me" He noticed

the look she was giving him “That's the same look Sally gets” She burst out laughing “See you later”

xoxox

“So – where are we going?”

“To the Forbidden Forest” Harry said, causing her to stumble a little
“But we aren't going – at least, our bodies aren't”

“Why?”

“Because Viktor, not to mention your parents, would never forgive me if we were eaten by an Acromantula”

xoxox

“I am looking for Aragog” Harry called out. He and Hermione had projected themselves in to the Forest ten minutes before, and were now trying to find the acromantulas' nest. He saw a black shape move, and spider the size of a dog crawled up to them.

“Why do you want my father?” The spider asked in a low, hissing voice.

“I have come to ask him to repay a debt” Harry said in a firm voice
“You will take me to him” The spider stared at him, then turned and crawled away. Harry looked at Hermione, and then they both followed the retreating creature.

Five minutes later, they were lead in to a dark area in the wood, surrounded on all sides by spiders of various shapes and sizes.

“Who calls me?” A voice came from a cave at the edge of the circle.

“My name is Harry James Potter-Black, and I come to ask you to repay a debt you owe” Harry called out.

“What debt?” The voice asked.

“Three years ago, I, along with my friends Miss Granger-Black and Miss Perks-Black killed your enemy – the basilisk that was roaming

the school” He paused, waiting for a response. When there was none, he continued “If I had let it live, it would still be a danger to you. So I ask you to repay the debt you owe me for that action” There was a long pause, then they saw the giant spider crawl out of the cave.

“You speak truly, Harry James Potter-Black. Tell me what you ask, and I will consider it”

“In six nights, the man who used that creature will attack the school. He will kill all those he finds here. All I ask is that you, and your children patrol the Forest from dusk until dawn, and stop any of his followers you see” He smiled “You may use any method you see fit to stop them”

“You do not mind my children feasting on human flesh?”

“Only if it is the dark man's followers” Harry replied “You will touch no one else” There were a few moments of chittering as the spiders discussed it amongst themselves, then Aragog turned back to them.

“We will do as you ask” He hissed “But how do you plan to leave here? My children are hungry, and they have not had such young, tender flesh as yours in a while”

“They can try, but we are not really here” Harry said “I will come to you at dusk, to tell you if your services are necessary. Whether they are or not, I will consider you released from your debt” Aragog gazed at him for a moment, then gave a slight bow. Both Harry and Hermione returned it, then they let themselves fade out of sight.

xoxox

“You got the acromantulas on our side?” Sally asked in disbelief. The three of them had met up before the main Order meeting.

“And the centaurs” Hermione replied with a smug grin “Turns out that if you treat them with respect, and ask them nicely, they are not all that bad”

“And if you ask them when you are incorporeal, they can't kill you before they answer” Harry added “Which is also good”

“Okay” Sally smiled “So the school will be more or less defended. Are we going to tell Dumbledore?”

“No” Hermione shook her head “Not unless we have to”

“Because?” Harry asked.

“He will ask how we know, and he will cancel the Dance, meaning we will lose our chance to attack when we know Voldemort will be at his manor” Sally replied “We will leave a letter with Mum, and if the attack goes badly, she can send it. Hopefully he will have enough time to do something about it”

“Okay” Harry nodded “Are we ready?”

“Yup” Sally replied “Lets go tell the others what we are going to do”

Chapter 14 – At the Hands of The Other

The next six days passed in a blur. Harry, Hermione and Sally spent most of their free time training, sometimes in The Chamber with Luna and Myrtle, other times in Grimmauld Place with the adult members of The Order.

Meanwhile Susan and Remus continued perfecting the spell they had found. The question as to how Voldemort had survived the first killing curse was still unanswered, and they were not willing to face the possibility that they would have to go through another war in twenty years.

Viktor, when he wasn't helping with the training, was making discrete inquiries amongst his old school friends as to what support he could gain if Voldemort were to attack Hogwarts. Eric was doing the same through his various sources at The Quibbler. Hermione's parents were ensuring the last shipment of C4 reached them on time, along with some other things that their daughter had asked for.

xoxox

"I want to call a meeting tonight" Sally told Harry and Hermione
"Before we go"

"Okay. I will let Luna know" Hermione replied, then she vanished.
Harry turned to Sally.

"When do you want to hold the meeting?" He asked.

"Five ish. I think if we leave at six, we can get there at a suitable time"

"Okay" He nodded in a distracted manner.

"What's wrong?"

"There's one more thing I want to before we go" He looked up at her
"I want to visit Sirius' grave"

"Okay" She smiled "Would you like me to come with you?"

"I think I would" He replied "And Minnie, if you don't mind"

"I don't" She looked at her watch "You should go – you don't want to get a detention for lateness, do you?"

xoxox

Later that evening, Harry knelt down in front of his godfather's gravestone.

"Hey. I know I haven't been by in a while, but we've been a little busy" He smiled "See – we are about an hour away from the final battle – the big showdown between good and evil. I think we are ready, but I also know that, compared to Voldemort, his Death Eaters are like babes in the wood" He wiped away a tear.

"I miss you. There isn't a day goes by when I don't wish you were still here. I wish you would be there when we come home victorious. And I wish you would be there to take care of Sue and Claire and the others if we don't come home at all" He sighed.

"But if everyone got what they wished for, then Voldemort would be ruling the world, and I would be dead" He gave a small smirk "Or living with my aunt, which seems like a fate worse than death" He stood up.

"Wherever you are, I hope you are having fun, and that, when we come home, you will be celebrating as much as we are" He kissed his hand, then touched the top of the gravestone.

"Take care, Uncle Mike. I will be back soon" He wiped his eyes again, then turned to the two girls who had accompanied him "Lets go" He held out his hand to Sally, and then stopped when she simply stared at it "Sal?"

"Your hand" She said "That's your hand"

"Yes" Harry waved it at her "I know that" He glanced at Hermione, but she simply shrugged.

"No – you don't understand" She said, suddenly bouncing up and down on her heels "It's your hand because it is yours" She stared at him "But what if we cut it off, and attached it to me?" She took hold of it "Would it still be your hand?"

"I don't know" Harry said "But lets not find out, shall we?" He turned to Hermione again "Do you have any idea what she is on about?"

"I think I do" Hermione said "When you went to the Valentine's Ball, who's hand were you holding?"

"Sally's" He said.

"Are you sure?" Sally asked, glancing at Hermione "Because if you ask TWS, she would say you were holding Hermione's" Harry stared at them, then he started to smile.

"So you think that if..." He trailed off, thinking about the possibilities "We need to give this more thought"

"Well – we have" Sally looked at her watch, then smirked "About ninety minutes before we are due to storm the castle"

"Plenty of time!" Hermione grinned

xoxox

"Okay – we are set" Sally said "Remus and mum have got the spell as good as they can, and we think we have a way to deal with Voldemort without shattering The Prophecy in to tiny little bits, Is there anything else?" Harry patted his belt, and looked at her questioningly. She looked at him for a moment, then nodded "Apparently House Black has a large amount of weapons of various sorts. I took one I thought I could handle"

"Okay" He nodded, then looked around "Anything else?" When everyone shook their head, Sally smiled, then picked up a letter from the desk.

“Now – this is the bit you are not going to like” She looked around the room “If we are not back before the start of school tomorrow, I want you all to do two things for us” She held up the letter.

“First – make sure Dumbledore gets this. It is a letter detailing what will happen if we don't stop Voldemort, and urging him to take whatever steps he feels are necessary to prevent it” She gestured to Harry and Hermione.

“We agreed that, if we can't stop Voldemort tonight, we have to let Dumbledore know that there will be a massacre at the dance”

“Okay” Susan nodded “What's the other thing?”

“You all have to leave the country” Harry said. There were immediate protestations, but he held up his hand “This is not up for discussion. If we don't come back, it means we have failed, and sooner or later, he will come for you. We don't want you to be here when he does that. So we want you to promise us now that if we don't return, you will flee the country as soon as you can” He stared at them all. After a moment, they all nodded.

“I know you don't want to run from a fight, but it's a fight you can not win, and while dying for a cause is all well and good, that isn't what you would be doing” He turned to Sally, who stepped forward again.

“That's all we wanted to say” She said “Except that we love you all, and we will do our best to come back to you” She looked at her watch “Okay. It's time”

xoxox

Harry, Hermione and Sally appeared in the graveyard. They looked around, then Harry lead them over to the remains of the angel he had been bound to the year before.

“Before we go inside, we have to get rid of all the bones. We can't stop Draco cutting off his other hand, and we can't stop him taking someone else's blood, but we can get rid of the 'bones of his father'” Sally nodded, and turned to Hermione.

“We transfigure them in to one big rock, and take it with us” She said
“We can make it light enough to carry, or we can leave it here” She raised her wand, and a moment later, a lump of rock lay in the tomb.

“Take it out, and stick it in the rubble of the angel” Sally said “We can pick it up when we are done” Hermione nodded, and levitated the stone in to position.

“Okay” Harry smiled “Lets go and make history”

xoxox

“I had a date tonight” Thea moaned. She and Zack had been put on guard duty in the Manor “Snape knew it - I think that's why he stuck me here”

“I thought it was orders from our Lord” Zack replied.

“That's what he wants you to think” Thea replied snappishly “But Snape is always... staring at me” She shivered “I can feel what he wants to do with me, and he will stop at nothing to make it happen”

“You shouldn't worry about Snape” A voice came from behind them. They both turned in surprise, then slumped in to unconsciousness as two stunning spells hit them in their chests “You should worry about us” Sally glanced around, then she knelt down next to the two bodies, and pushed up their sleeves. She turned, and nodded to the two people behind her.

“Are we going to hide them?” Hermione asked.

“You heard what she said” Sally said, pointing towards Thea “She wanted to be on a date. If they turn up missing, it's possible that Snape and Voldemort will think they went out, despite what they were told” She nodded to Harry, and he came and knelt down next to her.

“May whatever god you believe in have mercy on your soul” They said at the same time, then, placing their wands at the back of the necks of the two Death Eaters, the continued “Reducto”

xoxox

"They have only been gone half an hour" Remus said, watching Susan pace backwards and forwards across the front room of Grimmauld Place "And you have been pacing every moment since they left" She turned and glared at him "I am just worried you will wear a groove in the carpet" She stared at him, then laughed.

"I'm sorry" She sat down next to him "You know we should get some sleep. I don't know what they have planned for tomorrow night, but I suspect we will need to be awake to enjoy it" She saw him smile "Yeah - I am not going to be sleeping any time soon either"

xoxox

"Four" Sally said "Two in the middle, one one each side"

"Any ideas?" Harry replied.

"We could go back and get Voldemort's father and throw it at them" She replied with a smile, then her face turned serious again "Maybe not"

"I have one idea" Hermione said "But it's risky"

"We are in Voldemort's lair, about to confront him in a fight to the death" Harry replied "Is it more risky than that?"

"Well – when you put it that way" She smiled, then closed her eyes. A moment later, Snape appeared next to them. He bowed, then walked out in to the room, and gestured to the two Death Eaters in the centre.

"You two – come with me" He turned, and walked back towards the door. As the two Death Eaters walked through the door, Harry and Sally stunned them. Snape smiled, then went back in to the room. A moment later, the process was repeated, and the remaining Death Eaters lay on the floor in front of them. Snape bowed, then disappeared, and Hermione opened her eyes again. She gave them a brief smile, then knelt down next to the Death Eaters. Harry and Sally followed, and, half a minute later, the four Death Eaters were dead.

xoxox

"You too?" Arnold and Claire Granger walked in to the front room to find Remus and Susan playing a game of snap.

"I am surprised you managed even a little" Remus replied, then smirked when the two new arrivals blushed "I don't want to know"

"It wasn't that!" Claire said, now blushing even more deeply "We were going through the plans for the display tomorrow night"

"Display?" Susan looked up "What display?"

"You mean Hermione didn't tell you?" Arnold asked "Well - I don't know if we should spoil the surprise..."

"I am short on sleep, and worried about my kids" Susan said with a glare "Do you really think this is the time to be teasing me with anything?" She couldn't help when laughing when he gulped.

"Okay – okay" He held up his hands in surrender "I'll tell"

xoxox

"STUPEFY!" Sally dove to one side as a stunning spell sailed over her head. She turned, and sent a blasting curse back towards the Death Eater who attacked her. It threw the dark-robed figure against the wall, and left him unconscious on the floor. She fired a stunning curse, then turned back to where Harry and Hermione were waiting.

"Well – that was fun" She said with a slight smile "I was starting to worry that this wouldn't be a challenge"

"Do you think anyone heard?" Harry asked, while Hermione summoned the stunned body of the Death Eater.

"I don't know" Sally looked around "I guess we will find out soon enough – if anyone comes looking for us"

"May whatever god you believe in have mercy on your soul"

"So – which way now?" Harry looked back down the corridor, then turned back to his girlfriend "I am somewhat lost"

“Reducto”

“We could try the point-me spell, but there might be wards and such that could interfere” They watched as Hermione stood up, still staring down at the body.

“I want this over” She said softly “I know we are doing good, but this is the third person I have killed tonight, and I...” She waved her hands about “I don't think I can do this indefinitely” Harry leaned over, and hugged her. He looked up at Sally.

“Try it”

xoxox

“Viktor, Eric” Susan nodded as the last two members of the Order came in to the room “Care for a game of snap?”

“Okay” Viktor sat down between Remus and Claire “Not exploding snap?” He asked.

“They thought we were sleeping” Arnold said with a smile “They were trying to be quiet” The room fell silent for a few minutes as the game went on, then Eric looked across at Claire.

“Are you still going ahead with the display?” Susan's head shot up, and she turned to glare at Hermione's parents.

“Did everyone know about this except us?”

“Not everyone” Arnold said with a straight face “I am pretty sure we didn't tell Voldemort” For a moment, everyone stared at him as if he was crazy, then Susan laughed.

“I can't imagine why you thought it took Harry to corrupt your daughter” She said with a smirk “If she is anything like you, I would have thought it would have been the other way round”

xoxox

Harry held up his hand, then pushed himself flat against the wall. Sally and Hermione did likewise, then Harry pointed to the door.

"I think they are in there" He said "I can hear three or four voices"

"Do you know who?"

"One is Snape" He replied, straining to hear "The others, I am not sure about"

"Min – you are the best at invisible projection. Can you do it through the door" Hermione paused, then nodded.

"I can try" She closed her eyes and, while Harry and Sally kept watch, she projected herself in to the room. She looked around, then slowly drew her mind back in to herself. When she was sure she was back in the corridor, she opened her eyes "Three Death Eaters, Snape and Voldemort" She said "This is the place"

xoxox

"My Lord, I think there might be a problem" Severus bowed low.

"A problem, Severus?" Voldemort turned to stare at him "Do please explain"

"The other guards – the rest of your followers – they are... dead"

"Dead?" Voldemort stood up "How?" Snape gulped, but before he could reply, the doors to the room were blasted off their hinges, and sent flying across the room, clipping one of the remaining Death Eaters on the head as they went past. As he fell to the floor, Voldemort stared at the three figures standing in the doorway.

"Tom Riddle" A young woman with red-hair and hazel eyes faced him "Your time is up. We are here to put an end to your reign of terror. You can either give yourself up quietly, or we can do this the hard way" Voldemort stared at them incredulously, not quite able to believe that they dared to do this "Don't take too long to decide, Tom – we are not feeling that patient"

"You must be The Order of V" He said with a smile "I have been looking forward to meeting you. I feel that I need to reward you properly for killing all of my most faithful" The blonde boy glanced at Snape.

"Not all" He said with a smile "At least, not yet"

"And you are not worried about the fact you are outnumbered?"

"We're really not" The three members of The Order raised their wands, and pointed them at Snape, the three Death Eaters and Voldemort himself "Now – are you going to give us your surrender, and accept your death as inevitable, or do we have to do this the hard way?" Voldemort stared at them for a moment, then, whipping up his wand faster than the eye could see, he threw a killing curse at the silver-haired girl.

His sneer of triumph turned in to a look of utter shock as it passed through her and blasted a hole in the wall behind her. While he, and the other four people in the room, continued to stare in shock, three blasting curses flew in to the room, sending the Death Eaters crashing against the wall. A moment later, three more curses followed, ending their lives.

"May whatever god you believe in have mercy on you, Tom, because there is no way in hell that we will"

xoxox

"Any news?" Myrtle floated through the wall "Luna has been asking me, and she is starting to get insistent"

"We haven't heard any news" Susan replied, glancing at her watch "Nearly three hours, and no news"

"Which is good" Remus said encouragingly "If Voldemort had killed them, then we would know by now"

"Unless he wants to keep it quiet, and then attack Hogwarts and throw their bodies in to The Great Hall" Susan said under her breath.

Remus turned, and she shrugged "Sorry - I guess I am not feeling that optimistic at the moment"

xoxox

"PROTEGO!" Harry raised his shield, then turned to face Snape "STUPFEY!"

"Is that the best you can do?" Snape asked, dodging to the left "I thought you were all about killing Death Eaters, not playing like you are in school"

"Wingardium Leviosa" He picked up a chair and sent it flying toward the former potions master. As Snape dived out of the way, Hermione, who was hiding behind a desk, sent a stunning curse across the room – right in to Snape's path. He fell without a sound. Harry glanced down and gave a quick grin.

"STUPEFY! INCARCEROU! PETRIFICUS TOTALUS!" As the ropes bound the prone figure, he turned to see Hermione and Sally dueling with Voldemort.

xoxox

"PROTEGO!"

"CRUCIO!" Sally threw herself to the left, and the cruciatus curse blew a hole in the floor. She span, and threw a cutting curse at his wand hand. He shielded, and took a step back, behind a bookshelf. She smiled, and called out to her friends.

"Miranda. Richard – Basilisk" She saw them nod in acknowledgment, and a moment later, they all turned their wands on Voldemort.

"VIDEO OBSCURUM!" The combined blinding spells hit Voldemort dead on.

"You think that will defeat me?" He called out "I have grown beyond sight – beyond vision!" He turned his wand on Harry "AVADKA KEDAVRA!" The green beam of light shot out of his wand, but Harry dropped to the floor, and it shot over his head. He turned to look at

Sally, and she nodded. Harry smiled, then turned back to The Dark Lord, who had continued ranting “And I know you can not kill me – no one can kill me!” Harry laughed out loud, and let the image of the blonde haired boy drop.

“No one is immortal, Tom. Not even you” He called out, watching while Hermione and Sally both projected a new image. A moment later, Sally turned, and ran towards the door. As she reached it, she removed the amulet around her neck.

“Even your own friends are deserting you!” Voldemort called out in reply, then sent a killing curse at Hermione. She levitated a chair in front of her, and it shattered as the curse impacted on it “One down, two to go!” Another killing curse flew at Harry, but he rolled over and stood up “What makes you think you can kill me, boy?”

“THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES!” Harry yelled out at the top of his voice, then he laughed as Voldemort took a step back “What's the matter, Tom? I thought no one could kill you” He gestured to Hermione, and she stood up and moved to her left, to ensure Voldemort was bracketed between them, then they threw two blasting curses at The Dark Lord. The first hit his shield, and the second smashed in to the bookshelf, shattering it.

“You will die for your arrogance, Potter!” Voldemort hissed “You and that mudblood whore you hang around with”

“Now that's not very nice” Hermione called out “Do I call you an insane racist half-blood with no more brains than god gave a Weasley?” She saw Harry look at her in surprise “Sorry - I meant 'than god gave a weasel” She glanced at Sally, who had made it round to the back of the room “Your mother should have taught you better manners, Tom”

“CRUCIO!” The curse flew out of his wand faster than she had ever seen, but a moment later a black shape rose in front of her, and the beam of light dissipated against the body of one of the Death Eaters. She turned and nodded to Harry.

"You're welcome" He said, then gestured to the front. Sally was now stood behind The Dark Lord with her hand on her belt. She nodded, and the two of them sent a volley of curses, making enough noise to cover up the sound of a sword being unsheathed.

"Is that the best you can do?" Voldemort called out mockingly as he swept the curses aside "When are you going to start fighting properly?" Harry jumped to his left as another cruciatus curse swept flew past him.

"We weren't trying to harm you Tom" He called out "We were just distracting you"

"From what?"

"From me" Sally said from behind him. As he span round, wand raised and a killing curse already on his lips, she drew the sword back, then slashed it round with all her might. For a brief moment, he stood still, a look of surprise on his face, then his head slowly toppled to the ground, next to his body. She stood, staring at the corpse, then felt Harry's hand on her shoulder.

"Put this on – we have to do it now" He slipped her amulet around her neck, then handed her a piece of parchment. She looked up, and saw Hermione on her other side, holding an identical parchment. They each held up their wands, then pointed them at the corpse.

Lords	of	Order,	Gods	of	Grace.	
Banish	this	soul	from	time	and	space.
In	your	name	our	spell	endow.	
From	whence	it	came	return	it	now.
Vanquish	this	evil,	banish	this	bane.	
Let	no	single	part	remain.		
Lords	of	Order,	Gods	of	Grace.	
Banish this evil from time and space						

For a moment, nothing happened. Then, as they watched in stunned silence, a black cloud rose from the body. It hung in the air, then vanished in a burst of pure white light.

Chapter 15 – The Order Revealed

After a few minutes, Sally turned to stare at the unconscious form of Snape.

“What do we do with him?” She asked.

“What do we normally do with Death Eaters?” Harry replied, raising his wand, but Hermione gently pushed it down again.

“Actually - I have a better idea” She said with a smile, then she walked over to the former potions professor “Incarcerous! Accio wands!” Another set of ropes bound him, while two wands flew towards her. She caught them, then snapped them in two.

“Min...” Harry started, but she held her hand up.

“Ennervate!” Snape woke up, and stared at them.

“Three Potters?” He sneered “My cup runneth over”

“Oh” Sally said “Sorry” A moment later, she and Hermione dropped their projection of Harry's form, and reverted to themselves “Is that better Professor?”

“Not really Perks” He turned “And of course, the mudblood”

“Greetings, Professor” Hermione gave a mocking bow “I think you should know that your master is dead” She stood aside, letting him see the decapitated form of Voldemort “And your fate is now in our hands”

“So you are going to kill me now?” He asked “Just get on with it”

“We're not going to kill you, my dear Professor” She smiled down at him “We are going to do something much, much worse” She paused, waiting to see his response.

"I've been tortured by Voldemort, and forced to teach Longbottom" Snape replied with a sneer "Whatever you have planned, it can't be as bad as that" She stood up.

"Wanna bet?" She raised her wand "STUPEFY!"

xoxox

Five minutes later, they walked out of the front of Riddle Manor, levitating two bodies in front of them. Hermione walked off towards the angel, and picked up the lump of stone they had dumped there four hours earlier. A moment later, she gasped in surprise.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked, rushing over. Hermione raised a shaky hand, and pointed at something in the grass. They both peered at the charred corpse of what appeared to be a giant snake. She turned and looked at him.

"Sorry – it surprised me" She looked back at it "Looks like it burned up from the inside" He shrugged, then glanced back at the Manor behind them.

"How long do we have?"

"Six minutes" She said "But the ward boundaries are just over yonder, so we can get the bodies and this" She waved the stone around "Outside the wards before we leave"

"Cool" He smiled "Come on – lets go"

xoxox

"Are we going to stay and watch?" Hermione asked. The three of them, along with the bodies of Snape and Voldemort were stood on the road beside Riddle Manor.

"Yes" Harry and Sally replied together.

"Okay" She held her hands up in surrender "Just asking" She glanced around, then stared in to the distance "What is it with things bursting in to flames tonight?" The others followed her gaze to where a small

shack was burning merrily away. They stared for a few moments, then all span round as a massive explosion ripped through the night.

“So – can we go now?” Harry asked. Sally shook her head, then turned back to the pyre that the Manor had become.

“FIDELUS AD VICTORUM!” She yelled at the top of her voice. As the giant-red V appeared in the sky, she turned back “Now we can go”

xoxox

Sally re-appeared in Grimmauld Place to find a completely empty lounge. She looked around, then walked out in to the main hall. She peeked in to the kitchen, then the dining room, then turned as she heard her mother's voice.

“Why would a cupboard burst in to flames for no reason?” Susan asked, as the six adults walked down the stairs, heading back to the lounge.

“It's the time of year for it” Sally called out with a smirk. She watched as the six adults came to an abrupt halt, then her mother bounded down the stairs, and swept her up in her arms. For a moment, Susan simply held her daughter in silence, then, slowly, she released her and took a step back.

“He's dead?”

“Really most sincerely dead” Sally replied with a big grin “And I will tell you all about it, but Remus - I need a favour”

“Yes, Sally?” He asked, resisting the urge to rush over and hug her as well.

“We have two bodies and a lump of stone to bring back. Can you give us three portkeys that will get through the wards?”

“Of course” He turned to the table near the front door, and pulled three flowers out of the vase. Casting three spells, he turned and handed them to Sally “Put them on the bodies and the... lump of stone and say 'home' – they will come here”

“Thank you” She gave him a quick hug, then turned back to her mother “Don't touch the bodies when they appear – we will follow them, and explain what we are doing then” She vanished, leaving the six adults staring in surprise.

xoxox

“Okay” Sally laid the flowers on Voldemort, Snape and the lump of stone “How did you attach his head?”

“A sticking charm” Hermione replied “It seemed the best way”

“Cool” Sally smiled back “You two can go home now, and wait for the bodies” She frowned “I am not sure that leaving Snape alone with Remus, or my mother, for any length of time is a good idea”

“Are you sure you will be alright on your own?” Harry asked.

“I will be fine” She nodded. Harry leaned over and gave her a kiss, then he and Hermione vanished. Sally smiled, then pulled out her wand, and tapped the three flowers, one by one “Home”

xoxox

“What is HE doing here?” Remus yelled as Snape's body appeared in the hall. He turned to Harry “I thought you were going to...”

“We were” Harry said “But Hermione pointed out that we could do something more entertaining” He smiled at his friend, then turned as Sally appeared behind them “Welcome back”

“Thank you” She glanced at Remus, noticing how angry he looked “I take it that Professor Lupin expressed his unhappiness?”

“You're damn right I did” Remus turned to her “How can you let him live after what he did to you, to Sirius, to James and to Lily?”

“Because killing him is too easy” Hermione said from Viktor's arms “What we have in mind will not only make him suffer like he should, but will also help in taking Dumbledore down a peg or two” She

looked at the others "Trust me. It's going to be a lot of fun" She paused, looking thoughtful "Well – for us at least"

"Are you going to tell us what this plan is?" Claire asked. Hermione glanced at Harry and Sally, who both nodded.

"Well – it's like this..."

xoxox

"Luna" Hermione appeared next to Luna's bed, keeping herself invisible until she knew no one else was watching. She pulled the curtains aside, and gently shook the young Ravenclaw's shoulder. Luna opened her eyes, then, taking Hermione's head in her hands, she kissed the older girl urgently. Hermione returned the kiss for a few moments, then gently pushed her back down to the bed.

"Sorry" Luna said, lowering her eyes and blushing "But I thought you were going to die - I thought I would never see you again" Hermione gently reached down and tilted Luna's head back until they were facing each other.

"I understand" She said kindly "And I'm sorry I can't be who you want me to" Luna shook her head violently.

"You are who I want you to be" She said firmly "You are my friend – my family" She smiled fondly "I love you, Minnie, and I would not have you any other way" For a moment, Hermione stared down at her, then she nodded in understanding.

"I love you too" She said with a smile, then she leaned over and hugged the younger girl. They stayed that way for a few moments, then Luna suddenly pushed her back and sat up.

"So – he's dead?" She asked.

"Yes" Hermione smiled back at her "He's really most sincerely dead. The war is over, and tonight, at The Ball, we are going to make sure everyone knows it"

"Good" Luna stared up at her "Can I help?"

"Of course" Hermione replied with a big smile "But only if you get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a long day"

"Okay" Luna nodded, then lay down in bed again "Min?"

"Yes Luna?"

"Thanks"

xoxox

"Good evening, one and all, and welcome to The Founders' Day Ball!" Dumbledore's voice rang out across The Great Hall, which had been transformed for the evening. The long, House tables had gone, replaced by smaller tables that sat eight or ten people. The banners of the Founders were draped around the walls, along with banners bearing the emblems of The Ministry, Hogwarts and the Houses.

"Tonight marks the 1100th year since the founding of Hogwarts – 1100 years since the four greatest witches and wizards of the age got together and formalised the teaching of magic throughout the country. It was a bold and brave decision then, but I think we can all agree that it has worked out very well" He paused for the applause that filled the hall, then continued.

"Hogwarts has a glorious history of educating the best amongst us. Ministers, Wizengamot Members and Members of the ICW. Authors, painters, spell-crafters and wand-makers. And tonight, we have some of our successful students back with us" He gestured to the tables to his left, where a number of adult wizards were sat.

"So – if you would all join me in a toast" He raised his goblet "To..." He stopped as there was a scream from the back of the hall. For a moment he couldn't locate the cause, but then, when he realised everyone was staring up – at the ceiling that, until a few moments before, had been displaying the same starry night that was above the castle itself. At first he wasn't sure what he was seeing, but a moment later, the shape resolved itself in to a giant V, red as flame. All round the hall, people stared in surprise at the sign above them.

“Ladies and Gentlemen – do not panic!” He yelled out “I am sure there is a perfectly reason explanation for this...” Before he could finish, the doors to the hall were flung open in a blinding flash. As the light faded, Dumbledore could see the silhouettes of five people, all dressed in hooded robes. Two of them were levitating what appeared to be bodies, draped in blankets, while the other three simply stood there. A moment later, they started walking forward, in a V shape. The three who were not levitating bodies all had their wands drawn, but were showing no signs of attacking.

Everyone in the hall watched in silence as the group progressed through the hall, coming to a stop in front of the stage where Dumbledore was stood.

“Professor Dumbledore, Minister Diggory. We are The Order Of V, and we have come here to give you this” She waved her left hand, and one of the blanket covered bodies floated forward, and came to a stop in front of the Headmaster.

“A year ago, you both denied that Voldemort had returned. You stood by and did nothing as he grew in power. You did nothing as his minions launched attacks on Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. You both have a duty to serve the best interests of your people, and you both failed in that duty to an alarming degree, leaving it up to us to deal with the problem for you” She nodded, and one of the other robed figures summoned the blanket, revealing the body of Voldemort “Do you still wish to deny that Voldemort has returned, Headmaster? What about you, Minister?” Both of them stared at the body in disbelief.

“You killed...” Dumbledore trailed off, staring at them “How...”

“How do you think, Headmaster?” The leader asked, then she flipped her hood back. A moment later, the other four followed her action. Dumbledore's eyes widened as he stared at three students, a Tri-Wizard Champion and someone who was supposed to be a muggle “Nothing to say, Headmaster? Well – we have more to say, so you will have time to think about it” Sally turned to Hermione “Min – if you don't mind?” Hermione floated the other covered body forward, and Sally yanked off the blanket.

“Your spy, Headmaster” Sally said with a sneer “The man you trusted to bring you The Dark Lord. The man who betrayed you” She nodded to Harry, who pulled out his wand, and cast the reviving curse. A moment later, Snape's eyes opened, and he stared up at Dumbledore.

“We thought that, since you are incapable of accepting the truth from us, you might like to hear it from his own mouth instead, Headmaster” Hermione said, walking forward. She pulled out a phial from her robe “I am sure you know veritaserum when you see it?” Without waiting for a response, she held the bottle over Snape's mouth.

“No!” Dumbledore said, pulling his wand.

“Expelliarmus!” Luna and Viktor shouted together, and Dumbledore's wand flew out of his hand.

“It's not nice to interrupt, Headmaster” Sally said with a frown “And I think that everyone will want to hear what he has to say” She turned “Ready, Min?”

“Yes” Hermione replied. She, along with Harry, had their wands pointed at Snape's heart “You can ask him now”

“Thank you” Sally turned to Snape “Severus Snape – are you a Death Eater?”

“Yes”

“Are you a spy?”

“Yes”

“For whom?”

“For The Dark Lord”

“Were you ever a spy for Dumbledore, or The Order of The Phoenix?”

“No”

“Why did Dumbledore believe you?”

“Because he wants to believe the best of everyone. He even wanted to reform The Dark Lord, and he had no intention of killing him”

“So he never made you take veritaserum to verify your story?”

“Of course not – he trusted me”

“When was the last time you spoke to Dumbledore?”

“During the Tournament. The Dark Lord told me to put some doubt in to Dumbledore's mind about Potter's friendship with Krum”

“Why?”

“For the same reason he did everything else – to try to gain more power over Potter's future”

“What else did he do?”

“Dumbledore had me make a potion to let him fake Potter's name coming out of The Goblet”

“So Harry was never in danger of losing his magic?”

“Of course not”

“So why...”

“Because he was desperate to get Potter out from under Black's influence, and thought that by rescuing the boy from losing his magic, Potter would be so grateful that he would do anything the Headmaster would say”

“Did you kill Sirius Black?”

“Yes”

“Did you betray Lily and James Potter?”

“Yes”

“Did you try to kill me?”

“Yes”

“Why?”

“Because it would upset Potter, and drive him even further away from Dumbledore”

“Any other questions?” Sally glanced at her friends.

“Were you involved in Sally losing her magic?” Harry asked.

“No”

“Do you know who was?”

“No” Harry glanced at Hermione.

“Was Alastor Moody a Death Eater?” She asked.

“No”

“So it was someone else?” Hermione asked.

“Yes”

“Who?”

“Bartemius Crouch, Junior” Hermione turned as a number of The Ministry guests gasped in surprise.

“So where is Alastor Moody?” Harry asked.

“Probably where Crouch left him” Snape replied with a smirk “In his trunk” Sally glanced at Dumbledore, who had gone deathly white.

“The veritaserum is fading” Hermione said “Any last questions?”

“How many people have you used unforgivable curses on?” Sally asked, still glancing at Dumbledore.

“Several dozen. I don't remember the exact number” Snape replied.

“Have you worked out why we let you live?”

“Because what I have just said will put me in Azkaban for the rest of my life”

“Well done, but that's not the only reason” She withdrew her wand “Pull up your left sleeve, please” Snape stared at her, then pulled back his robe. She looked back up at the group of dignitaries “Madam Bones – you might want to get ready to arrest a few people” She placed her wand against the Dark Mark on Snape's arm, nodded to the other four Order members, then yelled “REVELUS MORSMORDUS!”

The effect was instantaneous as a number of people around the room, jumped to their feet, grasping their left arms.

“STUPEFY!” Hexes flew around the room as The Order members stunned all those who had reacted to Sally's spell. A moment later, another volley of spells took down the rest. Sally looked around, then turned back to Harry.

“Looks like we missed a few” She said with a smirk, then she turned back to Bones “Madam Bones – I take it that, despite the fact we killed Voldemort, being a Death Eater is still a crime?”

“Of course” The Head of the DMLE looked around “Are all these...”

“Every single one” Harry replied “Including Dumbledore's divination professor, it seems” He turned to Dumbledore “Way to go with the hiring, sir. That's what – four Death Eaters in five years you've had on staff?” He shook his head, then turned back to Sally “Are we done with Snape?”

She nodded to Luna, who stunned Snape again. Sally smiled to her, then turned back to the Headmaster.

“Professor Dumbledore – do you have anything to say about your spy?”

"I have made my position on Severus before" He replied, staring down "What do you hope to achieve by rehashing all my mistakes in such a public forum?"

"You think we have covered ALL of your mistakes?" Luna asked with a laugh "Headmaster, I very much doubt that we could ever cover that much in our lifetime" She laughed again, then continued "We wanted Snape's confession heard in public" She gestured to everyone in The Hall "We wanted people to know the truth. Not what The Prophet would report, not what you would chose to tell the rest of the world, not what The Minister would decide that the public need to know" She stared at him "The pure, unvarnished truth"

"And now you have done that, what do you plan to do next?" Dumbledore stared at Sally "Continue your fight against those who you consider to be bad?"

"Because, of course, we are the only people who consider Death Eaters to be evil" Luna said in a stage whisper, causing a few of the tables near her to laugh nervously.

"No, Headmaster. The Order of V was formed to kill Voldemort and his minions" Sally gestured to the body in front of her, then looked up again "We think that The Ministry can deal with the rest of it" She paused, then laughed "Or we hope they can"

"Of course" Hermione continued "We know that we can't just fade in to the background. Harry and I are somewhat recognisable as Heirs of the Seven Houses" She glanced across at Luna with a smile "And being part of the group that vanquished the vile, venal, vicious villain Voldemort is quite probably going to make our names go down in history" She heard Luna snort in amusement "So tomorrow, at 3pm, we will hold a press conference out on The Quidditch Pitch. We are inviting all the press, and anyone else who wants to come. We will make a brief statement, then answer questions..."

"As long as they are not too impertinent" Sally interrupted.

"...as long as they are not too impertinent" Hermione finished "And, before you ask, we decide what is impertinent and what isn't"

“Until then, we are going home” Sally said “We have had a long eight months, and we believe that, having killed the most powerful Dark Lord in recent history, we deserve at least one day's holiday” She turned, and a moment later, she led her friends back towards the door.

“Hold on!” Umbridge yelled out “You just admitted to committing several murders, and massive property destruction” She raised her wand “You can't just walk away from this... STOP” She fired off a stunning curse over their heads, and it crashed in to one of the doors. Sally turned, while the others formed a diamond around her, all with wands raised, scanning the crowd.

“Madam Umbridge - I know you are new to the school, but generally speaking, the Defence teachers don't try to attack or kill their students until the last month of term” She looked at her watch “You are about two hours and sixty days early”

“Headmaster. Minister” Harry called out “Do you have anything to say about her actions?” Dumbledore stared at him for a moment, then turned to Umbridge.

“Delores – this can wait until tomorrow” Umbridge stared at him, then turned to the Minister. Diggory nodded as well, and Umbridge lowered her wand.

“Good choice” Sally said, then gestured for the others to lower their wands “So – can we leave now, or do you have something else to say?” When no one replied, she turned, and, still surrounded by the other four Order members, walked out of the completely silent hall.

xoxox

Sally closed down the pensieve, and turned to see the reactions of the others.

“I can't help notice that no one said thank you” Claire said “Is that a normal wizard thing, or is it just restricted to Hogwarts?”

“I think it's just Hogwarts” Viktor said “When I told my friends about this, they all asked me to pass on their thanks”

"I wouldn't worry about it" Eric said with a slight smile "If I know Diggory and Dumbledore, they are, at this very moment, planning a medal ceremony for you at the press conference tomorrow" He looked at them "They will pour so much honour and glory on you that it would be almost impossible for you to attack them for it afterwards" He realised that Harry, Hermione and Sally were grinning at him "But now I get the feeling that that's not going to be the case, is it?"

"Not exactly" Sally replied. She turned to her boyfriend "I think you should tell them, sweetie"

"Now?"

"Yeah. It's time" She squeezed his hand, and he nodded.

"Okay" He turned to face the rest of the group "I have been doing a lot of thinking about my future recently. Some of it was prompted by Sirius' death, but also by the confrontations we had with Dumbledore, and what happened during the will reading" He paused "A few months ago, I finally worked it all out" He looked around, then took a deep breath "It's like this..."

xoxox

Chapter 16 – Defying Gravity

The next morning, Harry and Sally came down to breakfast to find Remus and Susan already there.

“Ready for your big press conference?” Remus asked as they sat down.

“Pretty much” Sally said “After breakfast, we are going to let all of you ask us any questions you can think of, and we will either sort out our answers, or will just refuse to give on” She smiled “But we wanted to ask you something before then”

“What?”

“At the moment, only Luna, Viktor and us three are known as Order Members” Harry said “Now it is likely that Dumbledore and possibly Diggory can guess that we didn't do it alone – that you two, and the other adults we know, helped us. But they can't be sure, and if they are going to praise us, rather than bury us, then they won't want to go after you”

“Makes sense” Remus nodded.

“So the question is do you want to be known?” Sally asked “We don't mind either way – we can either protect you from all the publicity, or we can properly acknowledge your contribution in taking down Voldemort” Susan turned, and talked to Remus for a few moments, then she turned back.

“Can we talk it over with Eric and the Grangers?” She asked.

“Of course” Harry smiled “But if you could let us know before we go up on the podium, it would be helpful”

“Darn – there goes my plan of surprising you” Susan said with a smirk.

xoxox

“Minister, Headmaster” Delores Umbridge walked in to the Headmaster's office.

“Delores” Dumbledore gestured for her to sit down “I take it you know why we have called you in here today?”

“You have decided what to do about this renegade order, and have asked me to come here to give you my opinion, since I have a lot of experience in this area” She held up a scroll of parchment “Based on what we found at the various attack sites, and the testimony of those who's lives they spared, we believe this is a complete list of charges that we can file at this moment” She handed it to Diggory. He read through it, then handed it to Dumbledore “I can handle the trials myself, if you like”

“That won't be necessary” Dumbledore said, glancing at the list “The Minister and I discussed this last night, and we believe that any attempt to bring Mr Potter and his associates to trial will not go down well with the public” The Headmaster turned to Diggory, who nodded.

“Due to their... performance last night, the story of what they did will now be spreading across the country. The students who were at The Ball will have owed their parents. Their parents will have told their friends, and so on and so on” He shook his head “If we try to punish them for killing Voldemort, and killing his Death Eaters, we will look like fools”

“But they murdered over a dozen people in cold blood” Umbridge cried out.

“They executed Death Eaters in what appears to be a very humane manner” Dumbledore said “If they were professional Aurors, would you be so eager to punish them for their actions?” Umbridge stared at him in silence “I thought not” He shook his head.

“I am not any happier about the situation than you are, Delores – the idea of three children being killers is a disturbing one, especially given that one of those children is supposed to be a muggle – but at this moment, it would be political suicide to try to punish them” Umbridge continued to stare at him, then stood up.

“Very well. If that is your decision, I will of course, accept it. If I may be excused?” Diggory nodded in dismissal, and Umbridge turned and left the office. After she had closed the door, The Headmaster turned back to Diggory.

“May I suggest some extra Aurors on duty at the press conference this afternoon, Amos?”

“Why?”

“I suspect that Madam Umbridge gave in too easily” He glanced at the door for a moment “Perhaps I am wrong, but I think it is better to be safe than sorry, don't you?”

“If you say so” Diggory replied “Now – about the Orders of Merlin you suggested. I agree with most of them, but we are not permitted to give an Order of Merlin to a foreign wizard. We can thank him, but Orders of Merlin are for British Wizards only”

“Very well” Dumbledore paused “What about their parents?”

“Sorry?”

“As talented as Mr Potter is, and as helpful as his companions might be, they could not have done this alone. They must have had help from their parents and guardians – Susan, Remus, Sirius and Eric”

“And you think we should give Orders of Merlin to them as well?”

“If Harry acknowledges their help, then yes. Otherwise we should let their part go unmentioned and just focus on the three students” Dumbledore stared down at the list in front of him “You realise we are going to have a problem with the awards”

“Really?” Diggory looked through the list, brow furrowed, then looked back up at The Headmaster “I don't see any names here that would cause a problem”

“I will let you think about it for a while, Amos. I am sure you will work it out in the end”

xoxox

"Are you all ready to go?" Remus called out from the bottom of the stairs "We have about half an hour before you are due to address the conference, and it's a ten minute walk from Hogsmeade to the school"

"Why do we have to walk?" Claire asked, coming down the stairs "Can't we use a portkey or... something else?"

"Normally, yes" Remus nodded "But with the attention of the nation's, possibly the world's, press focused on us, I thought it might be best not to draw any undue curiosity about the ways we have of bypassing Hogwarts' protections"

"Makes sense I suppose" Claire smiled. She looked up as there was a clatter of footsteps on the stairs "Hermione Jane Granger! What have I told you about thundering down the stairs like a heard of rampaging elephants?"

"That I should do it all the time, cause it's fun?" Hermione asked, coming to an abrupt stop in front of her mother.

"Yes – that's exactly what I told you" Claire said sarcastically "Well done"

"I'm sorry" Hermione grinned back "I just haven't been in this good a mood in a long time, and I am kind of looking forward to this afternoon" Claire couldn't help but grin back.

"Okay - I will let you off, just this once" She looked up as Viktor came down the stairs "Maybe your boyfriend can teach you to behave like a proper lady" Suddenly, Viktor flung himself over the bannister, and came to a graceful landing in front of Hermione and her mother. Hermione tried to keep a straight face, but in the end she couldn't help laughing.

xoxox

"Sally – can I have a word?"

“Yes mum?” Sally turned, but then squeaked as Susan took her hand, and pulled her in to the kitchen.

“We have all decided – you can name the full Order” She said seriously.

“Okay” Sally nodded “But why...” She gestured to their location.

“I wanted to make it a surprise for Harry and Hermione” Susan continued “Because if you name the complete Order – everyone who you took an oath from – then they will come when they are called” She stared at her daughter, willing her to understand. A moment later, Sally's eyes widened, and she stared back at her mother questioningly. Susan smiled, and nodded.

“Thank you” Sally hugged her mother “Thank you” She turned as the door opened and Harry came in.

“We should be going” He said “Are you alright?” Sally turned and smiled at him.

“Yes, my love – I am fine” She skipped over and hugged him, then gave him a kiss “Well – let's go. We can't keep The Minister waiting”

xoxox

Diggory looked out across the Quidditch pitch, then turned back to Dumbledore.

“Where are they, Albus?” He asked, looking at his watch “It's nearly three, and they aren't here yet”

“I am sure they will be here, Amos” Dumbledore said calmly “Perhaps they were delayed on their way up from Hogsmeade”

“Then why didn't they ask for auror escort?”

“Because we are fully capable of taking care of ourselves, Minister Diggory, but thank you for your offer” Dumbledore and Diggory turned as Sally, Harry and Hermione walked up behind them. She turned to

the Headmaster “Dumbledore – we are ready. Can we get this over with?”

“The Minister will introduce you in a moment, but first I wanted to have a word with you” He glanced at the other two “All three of you”

“Make it quick, Dumbledore” Hermione said sourly “If we keep the press waiting, they won't be happy”

“I thought it prudent that I give you some words of advice before you go out there” He said calmly “You – all of you – have very little experience in dealing with the press, and today you are going to be facing reporters from most of the papers in the country, not to mention a number of international publications. Given your current jubilant mood, and the not unreasonable assumption that the press will be very willing to listen to what you say, you might be tempted to say more than you normally would” He paused, then smiled “That would be unwise. The press can be fickle, and while they may be willing to be your friends at the moment, they also will not hesitate to turn on you if they decide it is to their own advantage”

“And, I suppose, if that were to happen” Sally said “We would need friends in high places to defend us” She gazed at him “Friends like you, and the Minister”

“I am merely offering advice, Miss Perks – advice that...”

“Miss. Perks. Black” She said “I was invited to join Hermione's family, Headmaster, and I accepted. I realise that you are fairly old, but I didn't think your memory was that bad” She smiled “But, you were saying?”

“Are you going to heed my advice, Miss Perks?” Dumbledore stared at her.

“We will heed your words as much as you heed mine, Dumbledore” She said, then turned “Minister – you may begin your introduction”

“Thank you, Miss Perks-Black” Diggory nodded, then turned, and walked out on to the podium. Sally turned back to the Headmaster.

“Not joining The Minister, Headmaster?”

“No, Miss Perks” Dumbledore replied “I felt that my presence on the podium would cause a distraction – this is your conference, and you should be the focus of it”

“And of course” Hermione smiled “If you are not on the podium, then it is highly unlikely that anyone will ask you questions about this – questions that either you don't want to answer, or that you don't have an acceptable answer for”

“That is your opinion, Miss Granger, but...”

“Miss Granger-Black, sir” She glared at him “And you would do well to remember that I am not just a member of the House of Black, and that by showing disrespect to Sally, you show disrespect to me and my family” She turned her back on him, facing Sally and Harry “Is he nearly finished?”

“As far as I can tell, yes” Harry replied “But to be honest, he could just be getting started” He shrugged “He seems to like the sound of his own voice”

“Well – he is a politician” Sally said with a smirk, then she paused as Diggory's voice drifted down from the platform.

“And so, I give you the head of The Order of V, saviour of the wizarding world and the young man who killed Voldemort – Harry Potter-Black, and his fellow Order members Hermione Granger-Black and Sally-Ann Perks-Black” Sally turned to the others.

“It's time” She turned to Dumbledore “You will excuse us Headmaster?”

“One moment” He turned to Harry “I have to know – how did you kill him?”

“Well here's the thing, Headmaster - I didn't kill him” He smirked, and nodded towards Sally “She did” Dumbledore stared after them as they walked on to the platform, disbelief etched on his face.

xoxox

“And so, I give you the head of The Order of V, saviour of the wizarding world and the young man who killed Voldemort – Harry Potter-Black, and his fellow Order members Hermione Granger-Black and Sally-Ann Perks-Black”

As the crowd rose to its feet in applause, Harry, Sally and Hermione walked up on to the podium. Harry glanced at his girlfriend, but she indicated he should step forward.

“Thank you for that kind introduction, Minister, but I am afraid you made a couple of mistakes” Harry's voice carried across the pitch, even without magical amplification “I am not the head of The Order, nor am I the person who killed Voldemort” He paused, then took a step back “May I introduce you to our leader, the one who slew Voldemort and the person to whom you all owe your lives – Miss Sally-Ann Perks-Black” The crowd was absolutely silent as he stood aside to let Sally take his place. She glanced around, then, after glancing at the Order members in the crowd, began to speak.

“One week ago, we learned that Voldemort was going to attack Hogwarts on the night of the Founders' Day Ball. We considered informing Dumbledore or Diggory, but as they had known about Voldemort's return for a year, and yet had done nothing about it, we had no faith that they would take any action to prevent the attack” She resisted the urge to look across at the Headmaster, knowing that whatever his expression was, it probably wasn't good.

“For the past year, since the night of the third task of The Tri-Wizard Tournament, The Order has dedicated itself to removing the threat of Voldemort from our country. First we removed his base of support – the inner circle of Death Eaters we saw that night, and, once we had done that, we cut off the head, so that the body would wither and die. And although we achieved our goal, it was not without great loss” She paused, bowing her head for a moment.

“But now, I would like to introduce you to the other members of The Order. The people who fought with us, helped us and guided us, because they knew what was right. And so, I call forth The Order, and name them now” She saw her mother smile.

"I call Viktor Krum and Luna Lovegood-Black" She waited as the other two joined them on the stage "I also call Arnold and Claire Granger, Remus Lupin-Black, Eric Lovegood-Black and Susan Perks-Black" This time she glanced at The Minister, and couldn't help but smile at the expression of disbelief on his face as two muggles walked up to take their place as wizarding heroes.

"In addition to the witches and wizards" She smirked "And muggles that you see here, we also had some help from those who have passed beyond" She paused "I call Rowena Ravenclaw, Salazar Slytherin, Godric Gryffindor and Helga Hufflepuff" The four Founders materialized at the side of the stage to gasps of disbelief and surprise from the crowd "I also call Miss Myrtle Harker, who helped us more than I can say" As the ghostly school-girl appeared, Sally, Harry and Hermione all turned and bowed to her. She returned it with a shy giggle, then floated up next to Remus.

"And finally, I have two more people to name" She saw Harry turn and stare at her in surprise "Two men who paid the ultimate price for helping us, but never once considered stepping away from the fight. So I call Cornelius Fudge, who was killed for trying to bring Voldemort's return to the public attention" She paused as the former Minister of Magic appeared "And finally, the man to whom I owe my life, the founder of The Order of V and the man who brought us all together in the first place – Sirius Lee Black" Harry's face broke in to a massive grin as the spectral form of his godfather shimmered in to view next to him. Sally watched the reunion for a moment, then she turned back to face the crowd.

"Ladies and gentlemen – these are the people who stood by us through thick and thin. We may have struck the killing blow, but without the support of the people behind us – all of the people behind us – we would have either died a long time ago, or never even started. So if you wish to glorify our names, you should also remember to glorify theirs" She paused, then looked at Harry and Hermione. They both nodded encouragingly, so she turned back.

"The Minister also misspoke when he called us 'the saviours of the wizarding world'" The crowd fell silent, staring at her in surprise "Don't get me wrong – by killing Voldemort, we did save this world, or at

least give it a temporary reprieve, but that's not why we did it" She paused "We did it for James and Lily and Daniel. We did it for Cornelius and our Uncle Mike" She glanced at Claire and Arnold "We did it for the millions of muggles out there who had no way to defend themselves, but who no one in the wizarding world seems to care about" She let her gaze run through the crowd "And you – all of you here, and all of you listening at home – should be glad that these reasons existed, because otherwise there is a very good chance we wouldn't have bothered. We would have taken those we loved to safety, then left you to your own, well deserved fate" There were a few gasps of outrage and shock, but she ignored them.

"You – all of you – decried Voldemort as evil, but how many of you share his feelings that muggles are backward, inferior beings? How many of you believe that muggle-born aren't 'real' witches or wizards? How many of you think that anyone who isn't pure human should be treated as the lowest of the low?" She glanced at her friends "Hermione Granger-Black – considered the smartest and brightest witch of our generation, and yet if she wants a real future, she will have to look for it in the muggle world, because The Ministry won't hire a muggle-born no matter how talented she is. Remus Lupin – the best defence teacher we had in our time here, not to mention the only one not to attack us – is shunned and scorned for something that is entirely beyond his control" She saw a few members of the crowd nod, but most were now glaring at her.

"Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge – killed by other members of the Ministry for trying to expose the return of Voldemort. Sirius Black – the man who single-handedly raised Harry after his parents were betrayed by Pettigrew and Snape. The man who founded The Order of P, and the man who gave his life for mine without a second thought – how many of you still believe that he was leading Harry to the dark? That he was just waiting for a chance to return to Voldemort?" She paused, then smirked "And how many of you still refuse to believe that I, a mere muggle, killed the most feared Dark Lord in history?" She turned, and nodded to Harry. He stepped forward.

"We called this conference for two reasons. The first was to publicly confirm Voldemort's death, and to make sure that you knew the

names of all those who deserved your thanks” He gestured to everyone who was assembled behind him.

“The second is to announce that Sally and I are leaving the magical world” He paused as most of the crowd protested his words, but then his attention was drawn by one of the reporters.

“Mr Potter-Black” The reporter raised her hand “Drayanda Mulson, The Quibbler. Given that you have just defeated The Dark Lord, and that you and Miss Perks-Black could pretty much demand anything you want, why would you want to leave?” Harry paused, then saw both Luna and Eric smiling at the woman who had posed the question.

“Well – Miss Mulson – the truth is neither of us want to anything to do with this world any more” He paused, as if considering his words “And in this world – where racism is accepted as the norm, where the Head of The Wizangamot can kidnap and kill with impunity, where the daughter of one of the lightest families in the country can use a forbidden and evil curse without any punishment and where the government can legislate with whom you can be in love – can you really blame us?” He stared around, then reached out and took Sally's hand.

“Over the past year, it has been repeatedly pointed out to me by a number of people that, I, as the Heir to the House of Potter, can not marry a muggle. And I have finally decided to accept this” He picked out Ginny's face in the crowd, and resisted the urge to laugh out loud at the expression of joy and excitement on her face at his words “And so, as of now, I give up my claim, and instead I name Luna Lovegood-Black as the new Heir to The House of Potter, with all the rights and privileges that that position entails” He turned and bowed to the young girl, who smiled and nodded back “I am sure that she will make a much better Head of House than I ever would, and I look forward to seeing both her and Hermione in The Wizengamot when they come of age” He glanced back at Ginny, and this time he did allow himself to smirk at the look on her face. He turned to Sally, who stepped forward again.

“That is all we have to say” She said, addressing the crowd “It is our hope that you will listen to what we have said, and decide that maybe

this world is not the place it could be, but to be honest, I am not holding out much hope. So – have a nice afternoon, and thank you all for coming” She stepped back, then, a moment, later, the entire Order vanished in a flash of light, leaving the stunned crowd staring at an empty stage.

xoxox

“So, fearless leader, what now?” Sirius asked. After the press conference had finished, the entire Order, including the seven ghosts, had re-appeared in Grimmauld Place. Sally and Sirius had dragged Harry and Hermione off in to the kitchen for a private reunion, but now everyone was gathered in the lounge, as Sally had called a meeting.

“I just wanted to thank you all again” She said “We three owe you all a massive debt, and whenever you need us, we will be there for you”

“As long as you don't need us for the next three months or so” Harry chipped in, causing everyone to laugh.

“Well – quite” Sally continued “We have done what we set out to do – Voldemort and his inner circle are dead, and the other Death Eaters are in custody, awaiting trials that will send them to Azkaban for life. So, if you wish, I will release you all from your oaths, and disband The Order” She waited to see their reactions, and was surprised when Myrtle floated forward.

“We all talked it over while you were in the kitchen, and we thought you might do that” The ghostly girl said “But we decided that we won't let you disband The Order, at least not yet”

“Voldemort might be dead” Susan said, standing up “But the world that created him isn't. For all we know, another all-powerful Dark Lord could be waiting in the wings right now” She looked around the room, and everyone was nodding “So, rather than disband The Order, we think you should put it on standby” The rest of The Order members stood while Susan continued “We will go back to what passes for our normal lives, but if you should ever want our help again, you only need ask, and we will be there” The Trio stared at them, tears in their eyes, then nodded.

“Very well” Sally said, wiping her eyes “I accept your offer. But, as I said, it goes both ways. If any of you need us, we will be there” Harry and Hermione nodded as well.

“Well – now that we have got all that sorted out” Luna said “What are your plans now?”

“Honestly?” Harry asked “We don't know. We were thinking America, or possibly France. Basically somewhere away from here”

“But you will come back?” Helga asked “You are not leaving for good?”

“No – we are not leaving for good” Sally said with a smile “Quite apart from the fact our friends and family are all here, we have unfinished business”

“Draco” Luna nodded.

“Yup” Hermione continued “We didn't find him at Riddle Manor, so we can only assume he is still on the run”

“But you aren't going to chase him down now?”

“No” Harry shook his head “ We just want to go somewhere we can fade in to the background – somewhere where we can live a normal life, if only for a while”

“You don't want to go and have some fun - a big adventure?” Viktor asked. Sally and Harry grinned at each other, then turned back to the group.

“That's what we plan to do” Sally said “Because after the last five years, I think that trying to live a normal life could well be the biggest adventure of all”

Disclaimer :-

I am not JK Rowling, and I am not doing this for money, or any other type of tangible reward. All characters created (with the possible exception of Susan Perks) belong to their original creators, and I make no claim to own them either.

Please do not copy these stories and claim them as you own, otherwise I will get very upset and possibly report you to whatever site you chose to post them on.

I think that's about it for disclaiming things, but if there is anything else that seems to belong to someone else (lyrics, quotes – that sort of thing) do let me know, and I will update this to reflect it.

Authors Notes :-

This is an attempt to answer some of the questions that were posed in reviews, so some of you might have heard some of these answers before (if you left the question in the review, for example). The reason I haven't posted answers before is because some of the answers contain an explanation of the six story arc, and I thought that most people wouldn't want to know how the series ends while they are reading the first chapter of the second story. If I was wrong about that, I apologise, but that's the way things are :)

My original arc for the six stories was hand-written on eleven sides of A5 paper. Parts were remarkably detailed - I listed out the points for the first year House Cup, and the rest was a good summary of what happened during the early part of Harry's life, and the five years of school.

There were some minor changes (Hermione was going to be dating a muggle boy, Dumbledore convinced Peter to betray the Potters, Ginny runs away from Hogwarts in Year 5 and is killed by Voldemort) but the vast majority of the plot stayed the same (Sirius dying over Christmas, Sally losing her magic, Harry and Sally dating from Year 2, Sally killing Voldemort, Ron and Ginny being less than loveable, Fudge being a good guy).

Obviously, I wrote more details plots for each story, and revised the overall arc many, many times, but essentially, the eleven page summary that I wrote over 14 months ago remained intact to form the six story saga you have read here.

Why “The Silent Trio”?

Harry, Sally and Hermione essentially fight the war on their own, with no help from the Muggle or Wizard governments. They can't tell the muggles, because of the statute of secrecy, and because they would not be believed, and they can't tell the wizards, because Sally is (more or less) a muggle, and as such the wizarding world would be opposed to her doing anything in the magical world. Hence the name “Silent Trio” - they work in silence, until their task is done.

Why not “The Order of V”?

Because The Order was a late addition to the plot. While I did intend Harry, Sally, Hermione and the rest would always fight Voldemort, it wasn't going to be in any sort of formal group. But when Luna got involved at the end of “Return of Sirius Black”, I decided to give the group a name, and I admit part of the reason for “V” was to give Luna the chance to quote “V for Vendetta”.

What does “V” stand for?

Honestly, it doesn't stand for anything. I just liked the image of a giant red V floating above the ruins of various Death Eater Manors.

Did you mean to reference Buffy in “The Hufflepuff”?

Erm – no. Despite the fact I am a big fan of Buffy, I didn't connect Harry, Hermione and Sally's discussion about “A gateway to hell under the school” with Sunnydale High. And I am kind of ashamed of that fact :)

When did Voldemort return?

He possessed Quirrell in year 1 (“The Hufflepuff”), went in to hiding in year 2, but by year 3 he was back in Britain, albeit in his tiny little

baby form. The person doing most of the directing was Barty Crouch Jr, with some help from Lucius.

Why did you not let them be animagus?

I didn't see it as being a useful skill in the coming stories. While being able to turn in to an owl might be fun, it doesn't help when you are executing Death Eaters and fighting Voldemort to the death. It is not beyond reason that, now they have wiped Voldemort from the face of the earth, they can learn their animal forms.

Story Related Questions :-

"The New Girl"

Why Rupert Goldman and Aaron Brown?

Sirius didn't want anyone connecting Harry's life before he came to Hogwarts with Harry's life at Hogwarts. So he created a fake name for himself and Harry, and then changed it when they returned to the wizarding world. Also, it was to protect Harry from Death Eaters and Dumbledore when he was a kid.

Why not Harry/Hermione?

Because Harry was to end up with Sally. I know that is a pretty bad excuse, but it is all I have.

Why was Peter hiding, and why was no one looking for him?

Because everyone was looking for Sirius and Harry, and Peter was, pretty much, a nobody.

"The Hufflepuff"

What's with Harry kissing random girls?

Since he grew up with a friend (Hermione), and a female friend at that, I figured he would be more demonstrative and willing to show his own emotions, rather than shy and introverted.

What's with Hermione being giggly?

Pretty much the same thing – she had a good friend in junior school, and so she was more of an extrovert than she would have been otherwise.

Why does Sally keep referring to her father telling her things when we know that Daniel Perks died six months after Sally was born?

This was explained in “The Return Of Sirius Black”, but the short version is Daniel Perks left a pensieve full of memories for his daughter before he died, and this is what she is referring to.

Why didn't Harry play Quidditch?

Because he sucked at riding a broom.

Why did Harry suck at riding a broom?

He never rode on Sirius' motorcycle, and so didn't have such vivid dreams of flying. Also, he had a very good childhood (in comparison to being raised by The Dursleys, at least), and so would have no desire to escape from it, which is what I think his skill with a broom represents. And you also have to consider that, given that he grew up in a muggle neighbourhood, he would have had no chance to fly a broom around without being noticed by any number of people.

Why is McGonagall willing to go along with Dumbledore?

Since Harry was never given to The Dursleys, Minerva never got the chance to see how badly Dumbledore screwed that one up. And since Harry turned out to be very independent, and generally disrespectful of Dumbledore, she believed that Dumbledore was right to try to give Harry to The Dursleys, rather than have him be raised by this arrogant “American” wizard.

Was Sally just intended as a female Ron?

No. Although there were some similarities (the strategic mind, being a third part of The Trio) Sally was her own person. Obviously she took Ron's place in the Trio, but she was not meant to be a female Ron. If she came across that way, then clearly I did something wrong. (I will get on to the topic of “Mary Sally” in Year 5)

“The Defence Club”

Originally, The Defence Club was meant to be Dumbledore's Army. With Harry, Sally and Hermione teaching the kids how to defend themselves against “Slytherin's monster”

However, after some thought, it became apparent that, if they did that, then becoming The Trio later on would be a lot harder, and Dumbledore would easily work it out. So - I changed the plan, and left The Defence club as the first incarnation of “The Order Of V”.

How did Ginny end up in Slytherin?

Because she was desperate to make Harry her own, and would stop at nothing to achieve those ends. Which goes back to the fact that she thought Harry was dead, and started constructing all sorts of fantasies about him, and then – when it became apparent he was alive, and would be coming to Hogwarts – she kind of blurred the line between what was real and what her fantasies were.

Who are Richard, Summer and Miranda?

When the three kids were out and about during the summer between Years 1 and 2, they were in disguise so no one would recognise them. But if they were calling themselves Harry, Sally and Hermione, it would be kind of obvious who they were. So they all decided on “code-names”, for want of a better phrase. Hermione took Miranda (another Shakespearian name), Harry took Richard (with Tom Riddle and Harry Potter, what else would he pick?) and Sally took Summer (another “S” name, and because she liked the name). The rest of The Order also took names, which I will explain later.

Why are Harry and Fudge so nice to each other?

Mostly because neither of them like Dumbledore, and they both see the benefit of making friends to defeat (or at least frustrate) a common enemy. It started with their first meeting in The Ministry, and continued throughout the first five stories (until Fudge's death, obviously), with them being willing to help each other out.

Why was Luna petrified?

Actually – that was an accident. I just wanted to use someone that the readers would know, and Luna volunteered. And because of this, and because Harry, Sally and Hermione saved her, she got involved with their plans. But seriously – it wasn't in my original plan, and it was just a happy accident :)

What did Voldemort mean by “You will be attacked from within, you will never see it coming, and it will utterly destroy you”?

He was referring to Ginny cursing Sally at the end of Year 4. He was inside Ginny's mind for a very long while, and so learned a lot about her, including how far she was willing to go to to make Harry her own.

“The Return of Sirius Black”

What was Ron and Ginny's “prank” that got McGonagall so worked up?

Well – if I told you, it would spoil the fun, wouldn't it?

Why Alyssaria, not Crookshanks?

Because I felt like it. Plus she had a black kitten when she was a kid, so why not now?

Why not Sirius/Susan, especially after the joint custody?

Because Sirius was going to die, and I couldn't bring myself to put Susan through that. Plus she was still mourning for her husband, and didn't want to start dating while Sally was still living at home.

What happened to Peter?

Sirius and Remus killed him in an extremely nasty way, then disposed of the body.

“The Curse Of Exum”

Don't Dumbledore, Ron and Ginny have a life outside of their obsession about Harry?

Yes, but not much of one. Ron and Ginny form the DA, Dumbledore has political problems and so forth. But since the story is about Harry, Sally and Hermione, we deal with them, and how other characters interact with them. So that's why we tend to see Dumbledore, Ginny and Ron ONLY when they are acting on their obsessions.

What was Dumbledore's plot with the Goblet?

Dumbledore wanted Harry to think that he had saved the boy from losing his magic, and as a result would be very grateful to him, to the point that he would listen to the Headmaster's opinion over Sirius'.

And how was Snape involved?

He gave Dumbledore the potion that would confuse the Goblet. This let Dumbledore put Harry's name in, even though that act would not enter Harry in the contest.

And how was Voldemort involved?

He wanted Harry to relax, and think that the danger was over (since Harry was no longer in the tournament). He basically wanted to give Harry an easy year, with little or no problems, so that when Barty Crouch Jr kidnapped him, he wouldn't expect it.

Why did Ron think Hermione would go to the dance with him?

Cause he is an arrogant, self-centred moron. He knew Hermione wouldn't go with Harry, so he figured she would be dateless. As I said – a moron.

Why does everyone still call Sirius “Uncle Mike”?

Force of habit mostly. They have all called him Mike/Uncle Mike for three years, and so they got used to it. And also, since Dumbledore started referring to him as “Mr Black”, they continued to use Mike/Uncle Mike as a way to reinforce their relationship with Sirius (esp Harry).

Was Luna in love with Hermione?

Yes. Completely and absolutely. But she also knew that Hermione was falling in love with Viktor, and that, even if Viktor wasn't there, it was unlikely Hermione would return her love. But before you get too sad, Luna is happy with the situation, and has accepted her relationship with Hermione.

How did Hermione and Viktor get together so quickly?

Would you accept love at first sight? No? Okay. The truth is that it was part love at first sight, but also part the idea that opposites attract. Hermione, despite Harry's influence is still more of an introverted bookworm, and Viktor really isn't, so they compliment, and change each other.

How did Ginny escape being caught after cursing Sally?

She spent most of the year planning the attack. Is it so hard to believe that she would have planned a way to avoid being caught, especially since she had help from her brother?

Is Harry, Sally or Hermione (or any combination) an actual Heir of a Founder?

No. Only Salazar Slytherin had a true, actual Heir. Harry, Sally and Hermione are just normal, regular wizards, who happen to have attracted the attention of the Founders.

Have the Founders been helping them?

Yes. They have been cloaking Harry, Sally, Luna and Hermione's trips to The Chamber, making sure that the astral projections are not detected by the wards round the school, and giving all three students access to most areas of the school (Sally going to The Chamber, them accessing the Headmaster's office and the Ravenclaw common room and so on).

Of all the chapters in all the stories, "With Eyes Wide Open" and "His Right Hand" were the two hardest I have had to write. While the last two chapters of "The Coming Storm" came a close second, writing Voldemort's return was a nightmare. And writing it twice was even

more so. But I am very happy with the way they turned out, and I don't think I could have done them any better.

"The Coming Storm"

This was provisionally titled "The Fall Of Heroes", but then I decided that I wasn't going to be as mean to Dumbledore as I originally planned to be. And having used the phrase "The Coming Storm" several times, I thought that it would be suitable.

Do you have a complete list of Order aliases?

Why yes, I do.

Harry	:	Richard.
Sally	:	Summer.
Hermione	:	Miranda.
Sirius	:	Romulus (The brother of Remus)
Susan	:	Janus (The god of beginnings and endings in Roman Mythology)
Viktor	:	Mr Smith (a harmless sounding, traditional British name)
Luna	:	Eris (The god of chaos and mayhem) and Glinda (the somewhat flighty Good Witch of The North)
Remus	:	Mr Moore (A somewhat obscure Monty Python reference to lupins)

These four were not used in the story, but still created in my plot book.

Claire	:	Miss Manners (Hermione gave her the name)
Arnold	:	The Fixer (He gets explosives and stuff)
Eric	:	Androcles (And why not?)
Myrtle	:	Sabrina (The teenage witch, obviously)

When The Trio released Ginny from the life-debts they held, they saved her life. Why didn't that create another three life-debts?

Because the act of releasing the life-debt does not directly save her life. It just stops her magic from burning out (which was having the indirect result of killing her). So she doesn't owe them another life debt, because their actions didn't save her life. They just stopped her from losing her magic.

Was it necessary to kill Sirius?

Yes. It was. Letting The Order get through the war with Voldemort without suffering a single death was unreasonable as well as unrealistic. But I didn't want to follow JKR's lead, and have him die a senseless, pointless death. So he died a hero, saving Sally.

Why?

Because I am sick of “whiny Harry” stories – stories where he does nothing but mope about Sirius dying, and feeling guilty about it. So this time he helps someone else get over their guilt, and doesn't mope about it being a pointless death, since Sirius died for the cause.

Couldn't you have killed someone in the same way?

Well – no. Because Susan, Remus and Eric are not the Heads of one of The Seven Houses. Right from the start, I wanted to put Hermione in to a position of power, and having Sirius pick her to run House Black was the most entertaining way I could think to do it.

So Hermione is the Head of House Black?

Yes, to all intents and purposes, she is. However, because she is only 16, and not 18, she can not legally be called “The Head Of House”, so she is titled “The Heir to The House”. But, as with Harry (before he gave it to Luna), there is no real difference. Hermione is now the matriarch of House Black, and can run it as she sees fit.

Can Harry reclaim his title?

Yes, but only if Luna wants to give it him back. He can't force her to do it, because he is now only a member of House Potter, and not the Head of House.

So Luna will be known as Luna Lovegood-Black-Potter?

No, as much fun as that sounds. The Potter will take precedence, because she is the Heir to The House. So it will be Luna Lovegood-Potter, unless she wants to use all her family names, then it will be LLBP. And – just so as you know – if Harry and Sally do eventually

marry, she will not be required to call herself Sally-Ann Perks-Black-Potter because not even I am that nasty.

What was in the private message that Sirius left Harry, Sally and Hermione during his will reading at Gringotts?

There is a reason it is called a “private message” :)

Why didn't you kill Snape?

Because Harry, Hermione and Sally all have one common character trait – they all hold grudges for other people, but not for themselves. Sally would have killed Snape for his murder of Sirius, but Hermione didn't think that was enough – Hermione wanted him to truly suffer for what he did. So she ensures that he will be condemned to Azkaban for the rest of his life.

Is that why Sally didn't pursue Ginny?

Yes. Harry and Hermione would have merrily killed Miss Weasley, or used the same curse on her as she used on Sally, but Sally just wanted to get on with her life and let the past go.

And yet, in “Summer's Dance”, you said that “Sally was glaring at her with absolute hatred, while Hermione merely gazed at her with contempt”. How do you explain this?

While I did say that, it is not what it appears to be. If you go back and re-read it, you will see why Hermione seemed to have less hatred than Sally did :)

The things bursting in to flames – are they horcruxes?

Yes. They find Nagini outside Riddle Manor, the shack burning is because Slytherin's ring has been destroyed, and the reason the cupboard in Grimmauld Place burst in to flames was because Slytherin's locket was inside. There were other scenes I planned to write about the other Horcruxes, but I felt that it was getting repetitive and boring, so I left them out.

The “Mary Sally” Issue.

I guess it is a matter of opinion as to whether she is Sally or Mary-Sally, and I don't want to comment. Whether she is, or isn't, I like her as the way she is, and that's the way she will stay :)

Why did you end it like it was?

What do you mean "Why did you end it like it was"?

Dumbledore escaped punishment. Ginny escaped punishment. Snape wasn't killed. The Ministry wasn't torn down and replaced. Harry is forced to give up in to the pure blood laws. Basically no one got their comeuppance, and everyone got away with what they did. How can you do this?

Well – for three reasons.

Firstly - I didn't have any desire to do a "19 Years Later" chapter, or a summary about what happened. They kind of annoy me to be honest.

Secondly because it is the way of life. You never get everything that you want, so you try to get what you want most, and hope for the rest. Voldemort is dead, but Ginny gets away with what she did. The Death Eaters are gone, but Dumbledore remains in office. Harry and Sally end up together, but only if Harry is willing to give up something of equal importance. This is the way life is – you can't win 'em all.

And finally – well you will see more of that later (if you can be bothered).

Random Stats :-

Total Chapters : 84 (discounting disclaimers and so forth)
Total Words : 233,817 (39,000 per story, 2,800 per chapter)

Favourite parts : "Shatterpoints" (having Harry, Hermione and Luna tearing strips off Dumbledore was a lot of fun to write) , the last two Quidditch Matches in "Return of Sirius Black" (the one where Sally plays, and the one after, where she doesn't) and the two Rebirth Chapters in "Curse Of Exum" (because they took soooooo long to write, but they came out exactly as I wanted).

I started plotting out the story on the 9th of September, 2006. I finished writing it on the 26th of November, 2007, giving a total writing time of 441 days (During which I entered NaNoWriMo 2006 and Script Frenzy 2007, both of which I won with stories not in The Silent Trio Arc, and posted another 6 complete stories on various fanfic sites).

Finally :-

I would like to thank everyone who has left me reviews for all six stories. They have made the writing process a lot more interesting, and enjoyable. And to everyone who has read all six stories – a big thank you indeed for sticking with me :)

And, as I am writing this, I got this from “Nathalia Potter”

Not even a 'ten years later' epilogue where we get to see what happens to everyone?

The next chapter is a preview to the next part of The Silent Trio Series. It is a TV show style story (that is it will be a script, with three ad-breaks and a teaser) that starts in the winter of 2005. Harry and Sally have been away from Britain for ten years, but now they are back with some very important news. It is a cross-over story, with at least three other fandoms (but I am not telling you which ones, cause it will spoil the surprise), and maybe more (for “guest stars” and so forth).

I am not planning on starting this right away (I wrote the whole of The Coming Storm in 21 days, so I think I deserve a break!), but I thought it might be fun to leave you with something to think about in the future :)

Thank you all for reading. Good night.

Preview – The Western Sky

The camera swings over Hogsmeade. As it is coming up to Christmas, there is a heavy coating of snow all over the town, although – because this is a magical town and not a muggle one – the main streets are surprisingly free of ice and snow. As the camera continues to pass over the town, we see various groups of witches and wizards doing their shopping. There are many students from Hogwarts, as well as a number of adults. The camera starts to move down, and focuses in on a specific couple walking along the street. As we get closer, we can see that it is Hermione Granger and Viktor Krum. They are walking arm in arm down the street)

Hermione : Did he say what they wanted to see us about? *(She looks over at Viktor)*Vik?

Viktor : Yes dear?

Hermione : *(eyes narrowing)* What aren't you telling me?

Viktor : Nothing dear *(Hermione glares at him, and he crumbles)* I'm sorry, but they made me promise I would keep it a secret.

Hermione :*(reluctantly)* Okay.

(They walk along in silence for a moment, then Hermione spots something a little further down the road, and takes off at a run)

Hermione : HARRY!! SALLY!!

(She runs up to another couple, and throws her arms around them. A moment later, it becomes apparent that the witch and wizard are Harry Potter and Sally-Ann Perks)

Harry : It is nice to see you too Minnie.

Sally : *(pretend choking)* Can't... breathe!! Need... air!!

(Hermione backs off, and Viktor catches up with them. Harry shakes his hand, while Sally gives him a kiss on the cheek)

Sally : Now that you are here, we can go get a drink.

(She turns, and leads them in to The Hogs Head. From the other side of the street, we see them being watched by a witch in a hooded cloak)

Witch : *(Quietly)* He's back. After ten years, Harry Potter has returned.

(When they have gone through the door, she turns, and heads off up the street towards the school)

(The scene changes to inside The Hogs Head. Sally and Hermione are chatting at a table, while Harry and Viktor are at the bar. They bring the drinks back and sit down)

Hermione : So – how are Ella and the twins?

Harry : They are very well, thank you. We didn't know how long it would take to get settled, so they stayed behind with Luna and her family.

Sally : They should be coming across in the next week or so – once we have got the house set up, and the wards erected.

Viktor : And how are Luna and Tara doing? Have they got used to having a little one running around? *(Harry gives a short laugh)*

Harry : I think they have used more magic in the past four months than they have in their whole life, but I have never seen her happier. I think that, once LJ grows a little older, they might consider finding him a baby brother or sister.

Hermione : Wow *(She smiles)* You know - I love Luna, but I never thought of her as the motherly type.

Sally : Well – they will be coming over with our kids soon enough, so I will let you make your mind up then *(She takes a drink)* But enough about us – how is everything going with you two?

Hermione : Very well as well, thank you.

Harry : This is what – your fourth year as Defence teacher?

Hermione : *(Proudly)* Fifth. The curse seems to be well and truly broken, and – more importantly - I have yet to attack a single student.

Viktor : My wife is being modest as always *(He smiles at her as she blushes)* This last year's OWL and NEWT results are the best the school has ever had. People are even suggesting she could be the next Headmistress, after Dumbledore retires.

Sally : Well done *(She turns to Viktor)* And what about you? Min said you had had some kind of promotion?

Viktor : *(Grins)* Like you don't already know *(He notices Hermione is now glaring at him again, then turning her glare on Harry and Sally)* I think you should tell her now, before she resorts to some of her more... interesting methods of getting you to talk *(Hermione turns to Sally and Harry, and grins evilly. They both pretend to shake in fear)*

Harry : Okay – okay *(He holds up his hand in surrender. He look around, then pulls out his wand and casts a privacy spell. Once he is sure it is in place, he turns back, and smiles)* We finally got permission to do it.

Hermione : *(Stares at him for a moment, not understanding, then suddenly, she does)* Really? You got permission to form the group?

Sally : *(Nodding)* Yup. Apparently Dumbledore was the last hold out – he didn't think that having a fully independent group was necessary *(She smirks)* But our liaison with the ICW got him to cave in the end, by threatening to throw Britain out of The Confederation *(Hermione turns on her husband)*

Hermione : You didn't?

Viktor : *(Smirking as he nods)* Yes, we did *(He throws his hands up)* He was being totally unreasonable, Minnie – every other magical government agreed to Harry and Sally's group – they understood the necessity of the IWC having an investigative arm. Why should this

country be so different? *(He pauses)* But that is an argument we have had before.

Hermione : Yes, it is, and most likely we will have it again in the future *(She turns back to Harry)* So – what did you decide to call your new group?

Harry : *(Proudly)* The Western Sky.

Hermione : *(Choking on her drink)* Pardon me?

Sally : The Western Sky *(She smiles)* It comes from a musical we saw two years ago in New York. We both fell in love with it, and have seen it every year since then *(She smiles again)* When you come over for a visit, we will take you *(She notices that Hermione is smirking)* What?

Hermione : So – let me get this straight *(Pauses, trying to regain control of herself)* You formed a new, group of elite mages, taken from all the branches of magic you can find. You talk the ICW in to letting you have authority over the governments of every country in the world, and you talk them in to letting you work in secret, so no one knows who are you are *(She pauses, and glances)* Have I got that right?

Harry : *(Curiously)* Yes.

Hermione : And you give it the same initials as we gave Ginny Weasley *(She tries to keep a straight face, but when she sees the look on her friends' faces, she bursts in to laughter)*

Harry : *(Turning to Sally)* She does have a point.

Sally : Do you want to change it?

Harry : No.

Sally : Then just ignore her. She will stop laughing eventually *(They both turn back to see Hermione still in fits of giggles)* Maybe.

(The scene changes to outside, and we see another couple walking along the street towards the pub. They are both wearing muggle style clothes, and are attracting some attention. The woman looks around for a moment, then we see her lips moving as she moves her hand. A few seconds later, the other wizards and witches who were paying attention all turn away and resume their normal course. The woman smiles, then the couple continue on to the pub)

(The scene changes to back inside the pub. Hermione has stopped laughing, and now looks serious)

Hermione : Okay - I am over it now *(She pauses)* But speaking of The Wacky Slytherin, there is something you should know *(She sighs)* I spoke to Remus last week – it seems that Miss Weasley is back in the country *(She pauses again)* In fact, it's pretty safe to say that she returned to Britain on the same day you did.

Harry : Swell *(He sighs)* Did Remus have any idea why she might have come back? I thought that she was pretty much an outcast after her trial?

Viktor : She was, but The Wizangamot didn't banish her, so she is free to come and go as she pleases.

Hermione : As for why she has come back – your guess is as good as ours. But given the timing of it... *(She trails off, and Harry and Sally both sigh)*

Sally : Well – we will burn that bridge when we come to it no doubt *(She turns as the door to the pub opens, and the couple we saw before enters. She stands up, moves outside the privacy spell, and waves them over. The three of them sit down together)*

Sally : Hermione, Viktor – may I present the head of our group, Andrew Trudeau, and his wife, and fellow agent in The Western Sky – Mrs Prue Halliwell-Trudeau.

(Andy and Pru flip their hoods down, then the scene freezes, and fades to black, then the words “End of Part 1” come up on the screen)